MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING
Government of Tonga

Curriculum Framework

for Secondary and Senior Secondary Schools (Forms 3 - 7) in Tonga

September 2025

Foreword

Education is a fundamental human right and a key driver of sustainable development and poverty reduction. Sustainable Development Goal 4 calls on nations to *"ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all."* At the national level, *The Tonga Strategic Development Framework 2015–2025* aspires to *"a more progressive Tonga supporting a higher quality of life for all,"* and mandates the Ministry of Education and Training to provide education for quality living that meets the challenges of the 21st century, both locally and globally.

Recognising the essential role of quality education in Tonga's sustainable growth and development, the Ministry has embarked on an ambitious three-phase plan to upgrade and enhance the school curriculum. This plan aims to ensure a systematic, coherent, and relevant curriculum that is responsive to the evolving needs of students and Tongan society.

With technical assistance from the World Bank, the Ministry has successfully revised the four core subjects—Tongan Language, English, Mathematics, and Science—for Classes 1–6 and Forms 1-2 as part of the first phase. The second phase introduces an innovative dual-pathway curriculum, offering students a choice between Mainstream (known largely as Academic) and Alternative (or TVET) Pathways in secondary and senior secondary education. This Curriculum Framework marks the first step in this second phase, outlining the principles, structure, and processes involved in the curriculum for Forms 3–7.

The new curriculum will provide clear structured pathways for students with a clearer range of core and option subjects as they progress through their secondary and senior secondary education to prepare them for further studies, employment and provide greater career opportunities.

The revised curriculum will offer a range of upgraded core and option subjects and provides clear, structured pathways that guide students in selecting relevant subjects, ensuring they are well-prepared for further studies, employment, and career opportunities. It reflects our commitment to equipping students with the knowledge, skills, and competencies needed to maintain their unique Tongan identity while developing the competences needed to thrive in an ever-changing globalised world.

The success of this initiative relies on the dedication of educators, school leaders, parents, and the wider community. I extend my appreciation to all those involved in shaping this framework and encourage their continued engagement as we move forward in its implementation.

It is my great pleasure to approve this Curriculum Framework, effective immediately, as a foundation for the revision and development of the Secondary and Senior Secondary Curriculum.

Honourable 'Uhilamoelangi Fasi
Minister for Education and Training
Nuku'alofa, TONGA

Date: 29 September 2025

Curriculum Framework for
Secondary and Senior Secondary Schools in Tonga

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Acronyms

AfL	Assessment for Learning (Formative assessment)
AoL	Assessment of Learning (Summative assessment)
ALO	Achieved Learning Outcomes
CITVS	Certificate in Technical and Vocational Skills
CK	Content Knowledge
GPK	General Pedagogical Knowledge
ILO	Intended Learning Outcome
KLE	Key Learning Experience
KLO	Key Learning Outcome
LAC	Language across the Curriculum
MEIDECC	Ministry of Meteorology, Energy, Information, Disaster Management, Environment, Climate Change and Communications
MET	Ministry of Education and Training
MIT	Manukau Institute of Technology, New Zealand
MLO	Major Learning Outcome
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PACREF	Pacific Regional Education Framework
PCK	Pedagogical Content Knowledge
PSSC	Pacific Senior Secondary Certificate
SEE	Secondary Entrance Examination
SEL	Social and Emotional Learning
SOLO	Structure of Observed Learning Outcomes
SPFSC	South Pacific Form Seven Certificate
STAT	Standardized Test of *Achievement* for *Tonga*
STEM	Science, Technology Engineering and Mathematics
TFP	Tonga Institute of Science and Technology Franchise Programme
TFSC	Tonga Form Six Certificate
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Studies
TIST	Tonga Institute of Science and Technology
TNFSC	Tonga National Form Seven Certificate
TNU	Tonga National University
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
USP	University of the South Pacific

Introduction

Quality education is a fundamental human right, but also a key driver of Tonga's national development. International frameworks such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 4) emphasize the importance of ensuring "inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all (UN General Assembly, 2015). In alignment with these global priorities, Tonga is committed to strengthening its education system to ensure all students acquire the knowledge, skills and values needed for success in the 21st century.

Curriculum plays a crucial role in defining the quality of students' learning experiences. It encompasses not only subject content but also the pedagogical approaches, assessment strategies, and competencies required for lifelong learning. In recent years, many education systems worldwide (including Tonga) have adopted a competency-based approach to curriculum design, emphasizing the development of key skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaboration.

Among the numerous definitions of curriculum, this curriculum framework has adopted the widely recognised concept of curriculum as "a roadmap for achieving socially agreed development and education goals" (IBE-UNESCO, 2015, p. 8). Curriculum specialists advocate that such a roadmap is structured around a clear and strategic vision for the holistic and inclusive development of all learners. Ensuring they acquire essential knowledge, skills, and competences for lifelong learning (Marope, 2017; Stabback, 2016).

Following a comprehensive review of the curriculum (Mahon, 2021), Tonga has recognized the need to revise its curriculum to better align with national educational goals and established effective practices internationally. This revision aims to improve student outcomes by ensuring that learning is meaningful, relevant, and applicable to real-world contexts. The revised curriculum framework addresses previous gaps, including misalignment between curriculum content and assessment, and will support educators in delivering high-quality teaching that meets the needs of all learners.

This document outlines the foundational principles guiding Tonga's curriculum renewal, providing a structured approach to ensure that reforms are evidence-based, contextually relevant, and sustainable.

Section 1: Background to the Revision of the Curriculum in Tonga

The decision to revise Tonga's curriculum stems from comprehensive reviews of the school curriculum and assessment systems. (Mahon, 2021., Pongi, 2021), which identified a range of key challenges. These challenges included

- inconsistent curriculum structures across subjects;
- weak alignment between assessment and curriculum outcomes at the secondary level, leading to discrepancies between Intended Learning Outcomes (KLOs) and measured assessment outcomes;
- an overemphasis on low-level learning outcomes and a focus on outcomes that target higher order cognitive skills and subject specific competences;
- gaps in content and lack of coherent progression across year levels as revealed through international benchmarking;
- weak content matches in some subjects;
- insufficient emphasis on skills development needed for modern learning, further studies and employment;
- concerns from teachers regarding the feasibility of delivering subject content effectively within the available instructional time.

To address these issues, the Ministry of Education has embarked on systematic three-phase curriculum reform process as follows:

Phase 1: Develop a new Curriculum Framework and renew the curriculum for four core subjects (English, Mathematics, Science and Tongan Language) at Primary Level (Class 1 – 6, Forms 1-2). This process commenced in 2020 with the initial review of the previous curriculum and is due to be completed by the end of 2025.

Phase 2: Renew the curriculum for core subjects and selected option subjects for Secondary Level (Forms 3-5) and Senior Secondary Level (Forms 6-7) beginning in 2026. This document provides the overarching framework to guide the process of curriculum development (Annex 1 provides the timeline for Phase 1 and 2).

Phase 3: Renew the curriculum for non-core subjects across primary and secondary school phases based upon the curriculum frameworks and the models provided in Phases 1 and 2. This phase will take place at a later date.

This Curriculum Framework for Forms 3-7 builds upon and extends the Curriculum Framework for Class Levels 1-Form 2 ensuring a continuous, systematic, seamless progression and alignment between curriculum and assessment along the entire continuum of schooling from Class Level 1 to Form 7.

The framework aims to ensure that the curriculum provides opportunities for students to acquire foundational knowledge and skills necessary for lifelong learning, adaptability, and problem-solving. A key aspect of this reform is the constructive alignment of curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment to create a more coherent and effective learning experience. This will require supporting teachers with

appropriate training, resources, and assessment tools that enable them to effectively implement the new curriculum.

International benchmarking has informed this revision process, drawing insights from countries that have successfully implemented competency-based education. By learning from these experiences and adapting proven effective practices to the Tongan context, this curriculum renewal seeks to enhance both student learning outcomes and overall education quality.

The following sections detail the principles, structure, and implementation strategies of the revised curriculum, indicating how it will meet the evolving needs of students, teachers, and the wider community.

Section 2: Overview of the Education System in Tonga

School phases

The education system in Tonga provides thirteen years of formal education, along with one year of preparatory education in the Early Childhood Education (ECE) phase. Primary and secondary schooling is organised into three phases.

The first eight years of school are compulsory and free for all children between the ages of 6 and 14. Following ECE, schooling is divided into three phases; namely, primary, secondary, and senior secondary (Table 1). In 2022 the Primary phase of schooling was extended from six years to eight years (Class 1 – Form 2). This had the aims of strengthening foundational learning before students enter secondary school, to reduce learning gaps and dropout rates after Class 6, as well as aligning to other Pacific Island nations (such as Fiji and Samoa) and international systems (such as Australia and New Zealand). By extending primary education, Tonga ensures that students meet global education benchmarks for basic education and foundational learning. As a consequence, the Secondary School Entrance Examination (SEE) has now moved from the end of Class 6 to the end of Form 2 (also known as Form 2).

The Secondary School Phase consists of three years and is followed by the two-year Senior Secondary School Phase, making a total of five years of post-primary education. At the end of Form 5 students will take the national Tonga School Certificate before progressing to Senior Secondary School.

Students have the opportunity to take national examinations in both Form 6 and Form 7 of the Upper Secondary phase and may also take regional examinations at the end of Year 12 and 13. Successful completion of the national examinations is required to progress to the next class level. The regional examinations (PSSC and SPFSC) align with international benchmarks, facilitating tertiary education opportunities in Pacific Island nations, Australia, and New Zealand.

Table 1: Structure of the education system

School phase	Class/ Form level	Age	No. of years in school	National Examinations	Regional Examinations
Early childhood	Prep	5- 6	1	n/a	n/a
Primary	1 – 8	6 - 14	8	Form 2: Secondary School Entrance (SEE)	n/a
Secondary	9 – 11	15 – 17	2	Form 5: Tonga School Certificate (TSC)[1]	n/a
Senior secondary	12 – 13	18 - 19	3	Form 6: Tonga Form 6 Certificate (TFSC) Form 7: Tonga National Form Seven Certificate (TNFSC)	Pacific Senior Secondary Certificate (PSSC) South Pacific Form Seven Certificate (SPFSC)

[1] The Tonga School Certificate was reintroduced in February 2025.

School calendar and instructional time

The formal school year consists of 40 weeks, which are divided into four terms, with each term consisting of approximately ten weeks. However, the actual number of teaching weeks is typically 30-32 weeks, to take into account the following:

- Mid-year and end of year examinations
- public holidays and national events
- sports week and study days
- weather-related school closures

Daily and weekly instructional time is structured as follows:

- Teaching periods per day: Typically, there are 5 to 7 teaching periods of 45-60 minutes each in a day
- Teaching hours per week: 25 to 26.5 hours
- Total instructional hours per school year: 800 to 850 hours.

While this instructional time is comparable to other Pacific Island nations, it is recognised that the time allocated to teaching and learning in Tonga is considerably less than in many other countries globally; where total teaching hours in the highest performing countries globally may reach as many 1,400 hours per year[2] and in middle income countries approximately 1000 -1200 hours a year.[3]

[2] In the highest performing countries such as Hong Kong, Shanghai, China, Japan, South Korea and Singapore, the average is about 35 hours per week, 40 weeks per year, totaling approximately 1,400 hours per year.

[3] In middle income countries in Asia such as Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand and Vietnam the average is about 32 hours per week, 38 weeks per year, totaling approximately 1,000 -1,200 hours per year.

Section 3: Vision, Mission and Goals for Education in Tonga

Education is one of the most valuable assets a person can possess. Through education, individuals can achieve personal fulfilment, attain their goals, and improve their quality of life. At the same time, an educated and informed population is fundamental to the development and well-being of society. Education in Tonga should help students achieve the appropriate balance between individual needs and the needs of the broader community. This involves fostering a strong Tongan identity by preserving traditional culture and values while also developing the skills and knowledge required to navigate an increasingly complex and uncertain world. Education needs to equip students with the competences to address key challenges, including climate change, environmental sustainability, conservation, and public health crises such as global pandemics.

The *Tonga Education Strategic Policy Framework 2022-2032*[4] (TESPF) is the guiding document that underpins the vision for excellence in education in the Kingdom of Tonga for the next decade. It envisions a future rooted in Lotu (faith), Fonua (culture, land, people), and education. The framework also underscores the importance of collaboration and solidarity in addressing national development priorities and strengthening resilience in the face of 21st-century challenges. These principles are reflected in the following vision for education:

Box 1: Vision Statement

Vision for education in Tonga 2022-2032

Excellence in education that is based on 'Ko e 'Otua mo Tonga ko hotau tofi'a' (God and Tonga are our inheritance) and founded on our working together.

The national vision is supported by a mission statement for education in Tonga that sets out how the vision for Tongan education will be achieved:

Box 2: Mission Statement

Mission for education in Tonga 2022-2032

Ke tau ngāue fakataha ke teu'i 'a e kakai 'o e fonuá ke nau a'usia 'a 'enau ngaahi taumu'a fisifisimu'á.

That we work together to prepare the people of our country, that they may achieve their aspirations

The aspirations articulated in the national vision and mission for education depend on a well-designed school curriculum providing the framework within which students can work towards developing the

[4] Ministry of Education and Training (2022), *Tonga Education Strategic Policy Framework 2022-2032,* In Print, p. 13.

relevant knowledge, skills and values required to achieve success in their educational journey. The TESPF sets out three overarching goals to guide education in Tonga:

1. Ako ʻokú ne poupouʻi ʻa e moʻui fakapotopotó

   An education that is of quality and that is relevant to our way of life, and which will therefore promote the resilience and sustainability of our people.

This goal emphasises a quality education that equips students with the capacity to adapt, innovate, and contribute meaningfully in response to challenges such as climate change, economic shifts, and technological advancements.

2. Vahevahe taau ʻa e ngaahi faingamālie akó

   That we share resources and ensure equitable access to education.

This goal emphasises that education opportunities must be accessible to all students across Tonga's 45 inhabited islands. Equity in education ensures that every learner—regardless of gender, location, disability, socio-economic background, language, or other factors—receives the support necessary to succeed.

3. Ngāue fakataha pea ke tākanga ʻetau fohé

   That we all take responsibility for the education of our people through shared governance, leadership, and delivery as one.

This goal emphasises working together to improve education through collective efforts in governance, leadership, and delivery. At the curriculum level, this means fostering collaboration, initiative, and problem-solving skills in students, preparing them to be active and engaged citizens.

Together these goals guide the development of a national curriculum that nurtures lifelong learning and supports students in acquiring the competencies needed to live, study, and work successfully in a dynamic global landscape.

The overarching vision, mission and broad educational goals have informed the more specific mission of the national curriculum.

Box 3: Curriculum Mission Statement

Mission of the curriculum

The curriculum is designed to provide students with content, opportunities, support, and guidance that enable them to develop the competences they need to study, live, work and succeed both locally and globally in a fast changing and ever uncertain world.

The successful implementation of the vision, mission and goals for education in Tonga requires strong commitment from educators, ongoing teacher professional development, adequate resources, and a robust system of monitoring and evaluation to assess progress. Ensuring continuous improvement in education will enable Tonga's students to contribute effectively to their communities and the nation's future development.

Section 4: Developing an Effective Curriculum

Crafting a well-designed curriculum along with its associated subject syllabuses and teaching and learning materials is a complex endeavour requiring a clear vision, extensive stakeholder engagement, and careful balancing of multiple factors. These factors include national aspirations, policy frameworks, subject content, pedagogy, assessment, resource allocation and teacher capacity.

An effective national curriculum is characterized by several key attributes that collectively contribute to the overall success of the curriculum in facilitating quality education and promoting the holistic development of learners. These attributes are outlined in Table 2.

Table 2: Attributes of an effective school curriculum

Attribute	Explanation
Clear vision and goals	The curriculum should articulate a well-defined vision of education, with clear goals that align with national aspirations and development priorities.
Relevance and contextualisation	The curriculum should be relevant to the needs, interests, and cultural context of learners and society, while integrating local values, traditions and knowledge. It should also address global issues, such as climate change and workforce readiness.
Flexibility and adaptability	The curriculum should be flexible to accommodate learners' diverse abilities, needs and interests. It should allow for adaptation at regional, school, and classroom levels, and include online learning options.
Integration of key competences	Subject-specific knowledge should be complemented by essential 21st-century competences such as critical thinking, creativity, communication, collaboration, and digital literacy. These competences should be embedded across subject areas.
Curriculum alignment with pedagogy and assessment	The curriculum should be closely aligned with assessment practices, learning experiences and pedagogical approaches to ensure coherence and consistency in teaching, learning, and assessment.
Equity and inclusion	The curriculum should promote equitable access to education by addressing the needs of all learners, including those from marginalised or disadvantaged backgrounds. Barriers to learning should be minimised to promote access, participation, and success for every student.
Teacher professional development	Successful implementation of the curriculum depends on well-trained teachers. Ongoing professional development should be integrated to equip teachers with the necessary pedagogical skills and subject knowledge.
Curriculum resourcing	Adequate learning materials, infrastructure, and digital resources should be available to support effective curriculum implementation.
Technology integration	The curriculum should leverage technology to enhance learning experiences, including blended and remote learning, digital tools, and ICT-based instruction.
Continuous improvement	The curriculum should be dynamic, undergoing regular review and evaluation to ensure that it remains relevant, responsive, and aligned with evolving educational goals, societal needs, and advancements in knowledge and technology.

Stakeholder engagement	The curriculum should provide opportunities for diverse stakeholders, including teachers, policymakers, parents, students and community members to have input into its development, implementation and evaluation in order to foster ownership, commitment, and collective responsibility for its success.
Alignment with educational policy and systems	The curriculum should align with national educational policies, strategies, and systems to ensure coherence and coordination across the education sector and facilitate effective implementation and sustainability.

While the Ministry of Education and Training (MET) has a well-defined vision for a world-class curriculum, it acknowledges the significant challenges Tonga faces in terms of financial resources, teacher capacity, learning materials, and digital connectivity, all of which can impact successful implementation.

Despite these constraints, MET remains committed to finding creative solutions to ensure that the curriculum is as robust, relevant, and effective as possible. By prioritizing capacity-building initiatives, maximizing available resources, and fostering strategic partnerships, MET aims to provide learners with high-quality education that prepares them for the future.

A well-designed curriculum also requires ongoing evaluation and improvement. The curriculum should be regularly reviewed and updated to ensure that it remains relevant and effective. Through continuous evaluation and refinement, the national curriculum will evolve to meet the needs of all students, equipping them with the knowledge, skills, and values necessary to thrive in an ever-changing world.

Section 5: Purpose of the Curriculum Framework

This Curriculum Framework serves as the foundation for the revised national curriculum, outlining its structure, principles, and implementation strategy. It provides a comprehensive guide to all components of the revised curriculum, ensuring coherence and alignment with national educational goals and international good practices.

The Curriculum Framework aims to ensure that the curriculum is coherent, relevant and effective. It supports the development of a curriculum that is of a competency-based model of intended learning outcomes. This model builds upon the previous outcomes-based approach but offers a more systematic, coherent, and streamlined structure that seamlessly integrates curriculum and assessment. It emphasizes the development of key competencies that enable students to apply knowledge and skills in real-life contexts. This shift aligns with recognized principles of curriculum design and is consistent with the approach adopted for the recently revised curriculum for Class Levels 1–Form 2 (MET, 2023). The competency-based model of intended learning outcomes ensures that the revised curriculum and assessment systems remain relevant to the unique Tongan context while being aligned with recognized good practices internationally.

The Curriculum Framework also defines the structure of the curriculum, including the arrangement of learning areas and subjects. It explains the rationale for integrating important cross-cutting themes such as developing 21st century skills, climate change adaptation, gender equality, and inclusive education, ensuring that students develop essential competencies beyond subject knowledge. Additionally, the framework expounds on the educational philosophy underpinning the curriculum and the fundamental approaches to teaching, learning, and assessment.

Finally, the Curriculum Framework provides guidance on how the implementation of the curriculum can be supported through well-planned teacher preparation and professional development. It also serves as a resource for developers of textbooks and other educational materials, ensuring alignment with the curriculum's intended goals. Furthermore, the framework highlights the roles of key stakeholders—including teachers, school leaders, and policymakers—in ensuring effective implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.

In summary, the Curriculum Framework provides the overarching guidelines upon which other more detailed curriculum documents—such as subject syllabuses, assessment frameworks, teachers' guides, student textbooks, and other support materials—may be developed, ensuring a coherent and effective curriculum system for Tonga.

Section 6: Developing the Curriculum Framework

The development of this Curriculum Framework was guided by a systematic and research-based approach, incorporating a comprehensive review of existing curricula, benchmarking against international standards, alignment with national policies, and extensive stakeholder consultations.

Review of the existing curriculum

A foundational step in the process was a thorough review of the current curriculum framework and subject syllabi for English, mathematics, and science for Forms 2-7 (Mahon 2021). This review analysed content coverage, progression across grade levels, alignment with learning outcomes, support for teacher development and areas requiring enhancement. The review also identified gaps and areas where improvements were needed, particularly in relation to emerging educational priorities and workforce relevance.

International benchmarking

To ensure that the curriculum aligns with global standards, the framework was benchmarked against internationally recognized curricula and assessment frameworks:

- Mathematics and Science (Form 2 level): Benchmarked against the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS[5]), focusing on content standards, cognitive demand, and assessment practices.
- English and Tongan Language: Benchmarked against the New Zealand Curriculum, with a focus on language proficiency levels, literacy progression, and communication skills.

Alignment with national policies and strategic frameworks

The curriculum framework has been designed to align with key national education policies and strategic documents, ensuring consistency with Tonga's educational vision. These include:

- Legislative and Policy Foundations:
  - *Education Act (2013)*
  - *Tonga Education Policy Framework 2004-2019*
- Curriculum-Specific Frameworks:
  - *Curriculum Framework for Tonga (2008-2012): Quality Schooling for a Sustainable Future*
  - *Curriculum Framework for Tonga for Class Levels 1-Form 2 (2023)*
- Strategic and Workforce Development Policies:
  - *Draft Tonga Education Strategic Policy Framework 2022-2032*
  - *Lakalaka Policy Framework (2011)*
  - *Minimum Service Standards (n.d.)*
  - *Faiako ma'a Tonga (Teacher for Tonga) Framework*
  - *Forthcoming National Language Policy for Tonga*
  - *Pacific Regional Education Framework (PACREF) 2018-2030*

[5] Mullis, I. V. S., & Martin, M. O. (Eds.). (2019). *TIMSS 2019 Assessment Frameworks*. Retrieved from Boston College, TIMSS & PIRLS International Study Center website: http://timssandpirls.bc.edu/timss2019/frameworks/

Stakeholder consultations

In addition to policy alignment and benchmarking, the framework was shaped through a participatory approach involving a wide range of stakeholders over the course of almost one year. These consultations have ensured that the framework reflects national priorities, workforce needs, and the perspectives of educators, students, and the broader community. Key consultation activities included:

- Education Practitioners:
    - Focus group discussions with teachers, head teachers, and a selected group of Form 5 students (April 2024).
    - Consultations with academic staff at Tonga National University's School of Education and the University of the South Pacific (USP).

- Government and Sector Representatives:
    - Meetings with officials from the Ministry of Fisheries, Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Meteorology, Energy, Information, Disaster Management, Environment, Climate Change and Communications (MEIDECC) to ensure curriculum relevance to national development and workforce needs.
    - Engagement with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to incorporate broader societal perspectives.

- Education Governance:
    - Discussions with and among the Senior Management Team of the Ministry of Education and Training (MET) during leadership retreats and strategy meetings.
    - Consultation with the Directors of the Education Systems to refine structural and implementation aspects of the curriculum.

Findings from these consultations informed key revisions, including adjustments to curriculum structure, learning pathways, learning areas and content emphasis to better meet the needs of learners and the broader community.

Informed by international approaches to curriculum development

The framework's design was also informed by internationally recognized models for national curriculum development, particularly the work of UNESCO International Bureau of Education (IBE). Key references include:

- Marope (2017)
- Stabback (2016)
- UNESCO-IBE (2017a, 2017b, 2018)

These sources provided guidance on curriculum macro-structures, competency-based approaches, and integration of cross-cutting themes. Notably, the framework aligns with principles established in the *Curriculum Framework for Class Levels 1-Form 2 (MET, 2023)*, ensuring coherence across education phases.

In summary, the development of this curriculum framework reflects a collaborative, research-informed process. It is grounded in a critical review of the existing curriculum, strengthened by international benchmarking, aligned with national policies, and shaped by extensive stakeholder engagement. The resulting framework provides a coherent, forward-looking structure to support quality education and lifelong learning for students in Tonga.

Section 7: Principles of the Curriculum Design

Curriculum development is a continuous cycle of improvement, rather than a one-time event. The curriculum development cycle involves several broad stages (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2018; Tyler, 2013), which have been adapted for the Tongan context and are summarized in Figure 1.

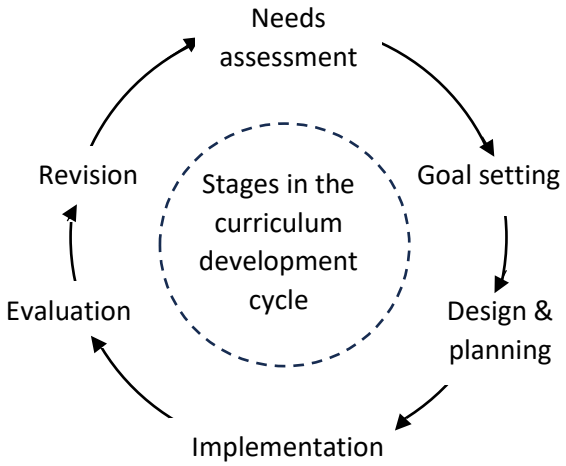

Figure 1: The curriculum development cycle

This cycle begins with a needs assessment, which in Tonga is informed by student performance data, workforce requirements, and benchmarking against internationally recognized curriculum development approaches. Based on identified needs, broad goals are established, outlining what students should achieve.

The curriculum design and planning stage then follows, focusing on developing or revising the curriculum framework, specifying learning outcomes, structuring content, designing learning activities, and establishing an assessment system. At this stage, essential resources—such as textbooks, teacher guides, and teacher professional development—are also determined.

Once these components are in place, the curriculum is implemented in schools, with training provided to support teachers in effectively delivering the curriculum. The implementation phase is closely monitored and evaluated, assessing both student progress and teacher experiences. Findings from this evaluation inform revisions and refinements, ensuring that the curriculum remains relevant, up-to-date, and effective. This process is repeated cyclically to sustain quality and responsiveness.

The revised curriculum is designed to provide a structured framework for applying the overarching vision, mission and educational goals outlined in Section 3. To ensure coherence and effectiveness across all levels, the curriculum is underpinned by eight core principles (Figure 2) adapted from the work of Dylan Wiliam (2013). These principles guide the design of curriculum content, learning experiences, and assessment practices across both primary (Classes 1–Form 2) and secondary and senior secondary (Forms 3–7) education.

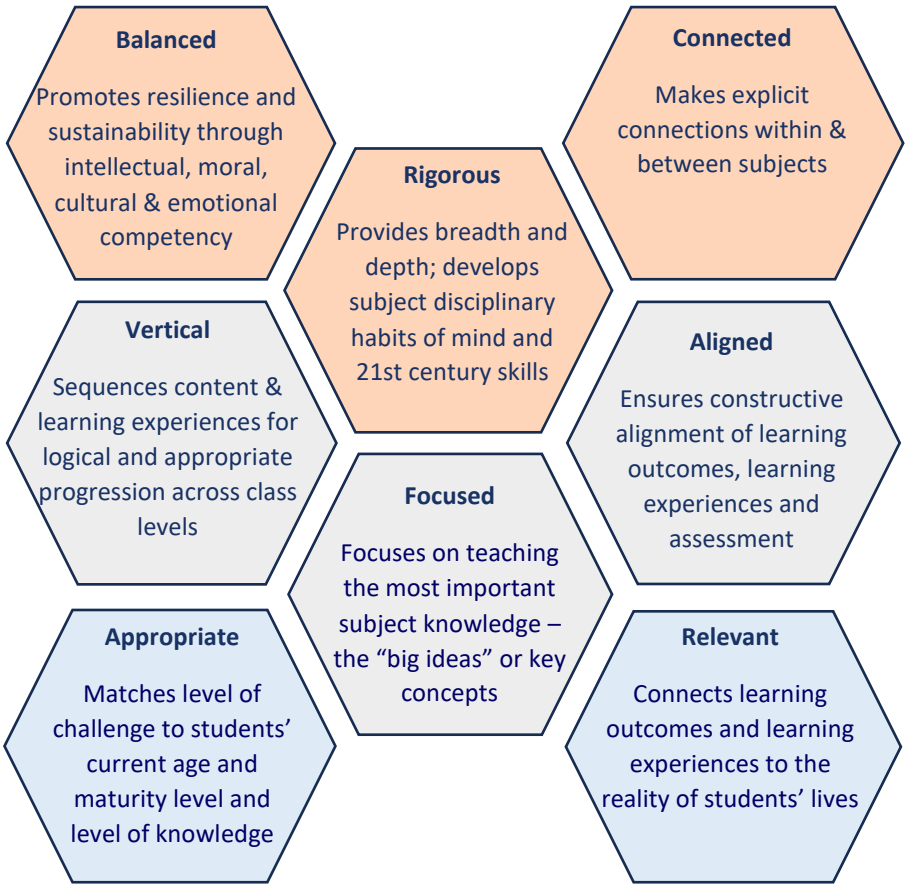

Figure 2: Matrix of core principles of curriculum design

These eight core principles permeate and inform the curriculum in the following ways:

1. Balanced – The curriculum promotes resilience and sustainability by fostering intellectual, moral, cultural, and emotional development. This ensures students receive a well-rounded education that equips them with not only academic knowledge but also the values and skills needed to contribute to their communities.

2. Rigorous – Learning is designed to be both broad (covering multiple disciplines) and deep (ensuring mastery of key concepts). The curriculum also nurtures subject-specific habits of mind—such as critical thinking in mathematics, inquiry skills in science, and creativity in the arts—while preparing students with 21st-century competencies, such as communication, problem-solving and creativity.

3. Connected – Learning is most effective when students see meaningful connections among subjects. For example, literacy skills developed in language lessons support comprehension in science and history, while mathematical reasoning applies to economics and technical subjects. The curriculum fosters cross-disciplinary links, ensuring knowledge is integrated rather than fragmented.

4. Aligned – The curriculum follows a constructive alignment approach, ensuring that learning outcomes, instructional methods, and assessment strategies are coherently linked. For example, if a science outcome focuses on inquiry-based learning, assessments should evaluate

students' ability to investigate and analyse, rather than just recall facts. This alignment improves the validity of assessment and enhances teaching effectiveness.

5. Vertical – Knowledge and skills are structured progressively across levels, ensuring a logical and developmentally appropriate sequence of learning. For example, in mathematics, students develop foundational algebraic manipulation skills in lower secondary before applying them to functions and calculus in senior secondary. This structured sequencing ensures students acquire foundational knowledge before tackling more complex concepts.

6. Focused – The curriculum emphasizes the "big ideas" or key concepts that form the backbone of each subject. Rather than overwhelming students with excessive content, it prioritizes essential knowledge and skills. For example, in science, students focus on key disciplinary concepts such as energy, matter, and ecosystems, rather than memorizing isolated facts. This principle enhances depth of understanding and long-term retention.

7. Appropriate – The curriculum matches the level of challenge to students' cognitive and developmental stages. For instance, in history, lower secondary students analyse primary sources with guidance, while senior secondary students engage in independent critical evaluation of historical interpretations. This ensures content remains accessible yet stimulating.

8. Relevant – Learning is meaningful when it relates to students' real-world experiences, cultural background, and future aspirations. The curriculum integrates Tongan values, traditions, and contemporary issues, helping students see how their education connects to their lives and society. For example, the subject Climate Change and Sustainability incorporates traditional knowledge of land and sea conservation, while entrepreneurship education in Functional Work Studies can be linked to local industries.

By embedding these principles into curriculum design, the education system can enhance student engagement, learning outcomes, and long-term success. These principles provide a foundation for approaches to teaching and learning, instructional and resource design and teacher professional development, ensuring that students' learning experiences are engaging, meaningful, and supportive of their holistic development.

Section 8: A Competency and Learning Outcome-based Curriculum

The revised curriculum builds on the outcomes-based approach introduced in 2012 but incorporates a more streamlined model of competency-based Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs). This model is tailored to Tonga's unique context while aligning with recognized international standards and effective practices. It ensures consistency across all subjects and class levels (Class 1–form 7) by articulating a clear progression of cognitive skills and subject-specific competences across four levels: basic, intermediate, proficient, and advanced. Emphasizing constructive alignment, the approach ensures that content, learning experiences, and assessments are meaningfully linked to learning outcomes. Additionally, gaps identified in the previous curriculum have been addressed in subject syllabuses and teaching materials, ensuring comparability with international benchmarks. By focusing on competency-based learning and aligning all curriculum components, the revised framework aims to equip students with the skills they need to succeed in school, further education, the workforce, and as active citizens in an evolving and ever uncertain world.

What are competences?

While there are numerous definitions of competency, the three definitions in Box 4 capture the multifaceted nature of the concept, which is central to this revised curriculum.

Box 4: Definitions of competence

> 'A competence refers to a complex combination of knowledge, skills, understanding, values, attitudes, and desire which lead to … action in the world in a particular domain.'
>
> (Hoskins & Deakin Crick, 2010)
>
> 'Competence is not static but may be developed and performed at increasingly complex levels, e.g., from beginner to advanced to expert.'
>
> (Mahon, 2020)
>
> 'Competence is the ability of a person or organisation to achieve particular levels of performance.'
>
> (Mulder, 2001)

Competence is more than just possessing knowledge or skills; it is a holistic concept that integrates knowledge, skills, values, attitudes, and understanding, as highlighted in the first definition. Additionally, competence is dynamic—individuals can develop and refine their competences through practice and deeper, further learning, as indicated in the second definition. This progression can be assessed at different levels, aligning with the third definition's emphasis on measurable performance.

It is also important to distinguish between competences and learning outcomes. Competences represent broad educational goals, encompassing the essential knowledge, skills, and attitudes students are expected to develop. Learning outcomes, on the other hand, specify the measurable steps students must take to demonstrate their competence. Teachers use learning outcomes to assess students' progress and determine their level of competency development.

Table 3 provides examples to illustrate how broad competences align with learning outcomes across

different subjects. It indicates that multiple learning outcomes—spanning various strands or areas of learning—can contribute to the development of a given competency. Moreover, competences and learning outcomes often cut across different subject strands and sub-strands, thereby reinforcing interdisciplinary learning.

Table 3: Examples of alignment of broad competencies and learning outcomes within selected subjects

	Mathematics	Science	English
Competency	Problem-Solving and Analytical Thinking	Scientific Inquiry and Application	Communication and Critical Thinking
Strand	Algebraic expressions	The Living World (Biology)	Oral communication (Listening and Speaking)
Learning outcomes	• Students will be able to simplify and evaluate algebraic expressions. • Students will be able to solve linear equations and inequalities.	• Students will be able to explain the process of photosynthesis and cellular respiration. • Students will be able to describe the structure and function of cell organelles.	• Students will be able to present information and ideas clearly and persuasively in oral presentations. • Students will be able to engage in discussions, listen actively, and respond appropriately to others' points of view.
Strand	Measurement (Geometry)	The Physical World (Physics)	Reading comprehension
Learning outcomes	• Students will be able to calculate the area, volume, and surface area of various geometric shapes.	• Students will be able to understand and apply Newton's laws of motion. • Students will be able to identify and describe the properties and behavior of matter in different states (solid, liquid, gas.	• Students will be able to identify the main idea and supporting details in a text. • Students will be able to make inferences and draw conclusions from reading passages.
Strand	Statistics (data analysis)	Planet Earth and Beyond	Writing
Learning outcomes	• Students will be able to interpret and construct several types of graphs and charts • Students will be able to calculate measures of central tendency (mean, median, mode) and variability (range, interquartile range.	• Students will be able to explain the water cycle and its impact on weather patterns. • Students will be able to describe the structure of the Earth and the processes that lead to its geological features (e.g., plate tectonics, erosion).	• Students will be able to write a coherent and well-structured story that contains the key features of a narrative text. • Students will be able to use appropriate grammar, punctuation, and vocabulary in their writing.

Model of competency-based learning outcomes

The revised curriculum adopts a competency-based model for intended learning outcomes (ILOs) that integrates key educational frameworks and international benchmarks. This model builds upon the foundational concepts and connections discussed earlier and is shaped by the following elements:

1. The SOLO Taxonomy (Biggs, n.d.; Biggs & Collis, 1982), previously used to develop learning outcomes for Forms 3–7 in the 2008–2012 curriculum.
2. The Revised Bloom's Taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001; Bloom, 1956), which refines cognitive learning processes.
3. The Trends in Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) framework (2019), an influential international benchmark for assessing student learning in these subjects.

This competency-based model is designed to ensure that ILOs meet both the needs of Tonga's students while reflecting international standards.

Following the structure of the SOLO Taxonomy, the model defines four competency levels, each with clear descriptions of student learning progression (Figure 3).

Level 4: Advanced competency

Involves deep and abstract thinking and understanding, including the ability to

- examine and analyse information critically, judge its value and draw conclusions
- extend and apply understandings to new, unfamiliar, or complex situations
- use information to generate and create new ideas, products, or ways of seeing things

Level 3: Proficient competency

Involves integrating a number of points in a logically related manner, including the ability to

- take information apart, explore the relationships among the parts and reconstruct in a new form
- apply knowledge and understanding of concepts, information, and the relationships among them in new situations

Level 2: Intermediate competency

Involves knowing and interpreting facts, concepts, and procedures, including the ability to

- recognise, recall, remember and interpret information
- provide responses with multiple unrelated points

Level 1: Basic competency

Involves knowing basic facts and procedures, including the ability to

- recognise, recall, and remember given information
- provide responses based on a single point

Figure 3: Competency levels in the revised curriculum

These four competency levels serve as reference points for the development of ILOs across subjects and levels, ensuring a structured progression from foundational to advanced competences. The

structure requires a notional percentage of ILOs to be allocated to each competency level at each class level. The four competency levels also establish national assessment standards by directly linking learning outcomes to assessment outcomes (see Section 13: Assessment for further details). This structured approach ensures a coherent framework for curriculum development, instructional planning and assessment, and aligns with recognised good practice in competency-based education.

Structure of the model of competency-based learning outcomes

The four competency levels outlined above serve as the foundation for developing Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) for each subject at each class level. The curriculum model is structured around two interconnected levels of ILOs, supported by more detailed content specifications (Figure 4).

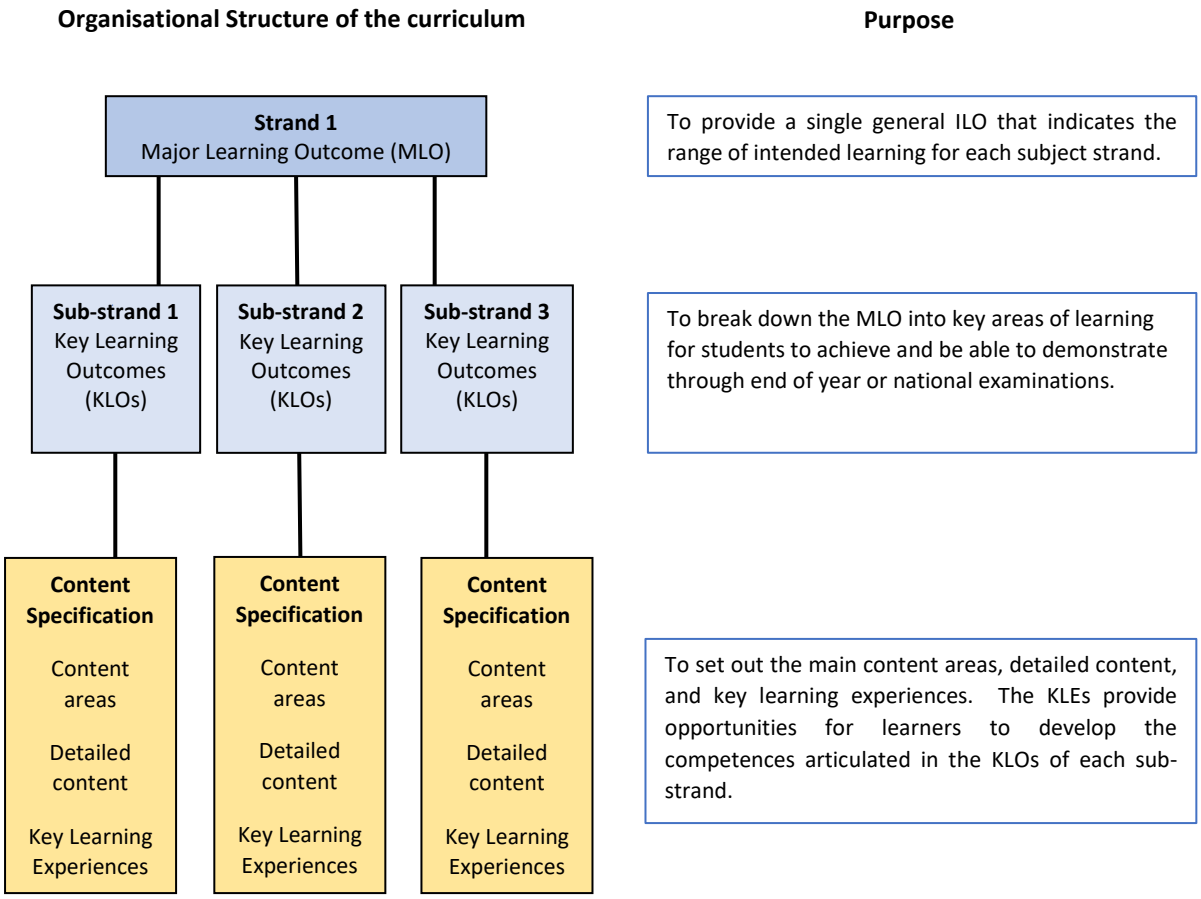

Figure 4: Overview of the curriculum structure

Each subject is organized into strands and sub-strands:

- A Major Learning Outcome (MLO) is defined for each subject strand, capturing its overarching goal.
- Each strand consists of multiple sub-strands, each containing a manageable number of Key Learning Outcomes (KLOs).
- Each KLO includes at least one action verb that aligns with one of the four competency levels, ensuring clarity in the competences students are expected to develop.
- The KLOs guide learning progression and directly inform classroom assessment, end-of-year evaluations, and national examinations.

In addition to KLOs, each sub-strand includes detailed Content Specifications, which:

- Define the core content areas or topics within the sub-strand.
- Outline the specific knowledge and skills that students need to develop.

Key Learning Experiences (KLEs)

A distinctive feature of this curriculum model is the introduction of Key Learning Experiences (KLEs); a new component designed to enrich student learning (see Section 11: Teaching and Learning Approaches for further detail). KLEs are structured, multi-stage learning tasks that:

- Provide students with opportunities to develop competences and achieve the relevant KLOs.
- Encourage deep learning by requiring students to consolidate, extend, and apply their knowledge.
- Frequently incorporate 21st-century skills and problem-solving in real-world contexts.
- Serve as the core of the Pupil Books, complemented by additional activities and exercises.

Teachers are provided with detailed guidance on implementing KLEs in the Teachers' Guides, ensuring that these experiences are effectively integrated into lessons.

Ensuring Constructive Alignment

The principle of 'constructive alignment' (Biggs, 1996, 2014., Biggs & Tang 2011) has been adopted to ensure that the key learning experiences and assessment are carefully aligned to the learning outcomes. Biggs and Tang (2011) argue that alignment of these three components is critically important and determines whether learning outcomes add value to the learning process or not. The principle of constructive alignment underpins this curriculum model, ensuring that:

- Learning outcomes, teaching methods, and assessment are carefully aligned.
- Students engage in learning activities that actively contribute to achieving the intended outcomes.
- Classroom assessments accurately measure student progress toward competency development.

KLOs and content specifications serve as the foundation for teachers' planning, instruction, and assessment. Teachers use these components to:

- Plan lessons and units of work that integrate Key Learning Experiences (KLEs).
- Determine appropriate classroom assessment methods and timing.

By maintaining a structured and aligned approach, this model ensures that learning experiences, assessments, and intended outcomes work cohesively, maximizing student learning and competency development.

Section 9: Learning Pathways, Areas and Subjects

The revised **secondary curriculum for Tonga (Forms 3-7)** builds upon the previous curriculum (2012) and many of the subjects included in it are the same. However, there are number of important changes. These include some subjects introduced at different class levels than in the previous curriculum; the number of core subjects has increased for Form 3 to Form 5 to provide a broader curriculum offering. Some option subjects are extended from one year to two years and a new subject, Climate Change and Sustainability is introduced as an option subject for the first time. This section explains these changes and how the curriculum has been reorganised into Learning Pathways, Learning Areas and subjects to accommodate them.

A Dual Pathway Secondary Curriculum for Tonga

The revised secondary curriculum introduces two distinct pathways: a **mainstream pathway** and an **alternative pathway**. This dual approach ensures that all students have access to a quality education that aligns with their aspirations, abilities, and future opportunities. The mainstream pathway is for students who prefer an academic program, while the alternative pathway is for students who prefer a technical and vocational program. The alternative pathway includes a new and different option to traditional academic learning by integrating practical and applied learning experiences, while the mainstream pathway prepares students for higher education and professional careers.

The Mainstream Pathway

The mainstream pathway is for students preferring an academic program and is designed to provide a strong foundation for those aiming to pursue university studies and professional careers. Key features include:

- A broad and rigorous academic curriculum that develops deep subject knowledge and critical thinking skills.
- A focus on academic literacy, advanced mathematical reasoning, and scientific inquiry to prepare students for tertiary education.
- Strong alignment with programmes offered at higher education institutions, ensuring smooth transitions to university programmes in fields such as law, medicine, engineering, and education.
- Opportunities for independent learning, problem-solving and research, fostering skills that are essential in an increasingly complex and knowledge-based global economy.

The Alternative Pathway

The alternative pathway is for students preferring a TVET program and is designed to equip them with the practical knowledge and skills required for technical, vocational and applied fields. A key component of this pathway is the development of applied courses in the core subjects of English, Mathematics and Science to align with career and technical education, ensuring that these subjects are taught in ways that are directly relevant to the students' chosen fields. Key elements of this approach include:

1. Contextualized Learning: English, Mathematics, and Science are integrated into real-world vocational and applied contexts, making learning more meaningful and directly applicable to students' career aspirations.

2. Skill-Based Curriculum: The curriculum focuses on the functional literacy, numeracy, and scientific knowledge that are essential in technical and vocational fields, such as trade skills, agriculture, tourism and hospitality, mechanics, and ICT.

3. Industry relevance: The content and skills taught are aligned with industry needs, preparing students for employment and further training in their chosen vocational fields.

4. Practical application: Learning activities emphasize hands-on and experiential learning, problem-solving, and workplace placements and simulations to reinforce the application of knowledge in real-world settings.

5. Increased engagement and retention: By making core subjects more relevant to students' interests and future careers, this approach is expected to improve student motivation, reduce dropout rates, and enhance overall educational outcomes.

6. Pathways for Lifelong Learning: The integration of applied English, mathematics, and science will provide students with foundational skills that can support further education and career advancement, whether in technical fields or through entrepreneurship.

7. Bridging Academic and Vocational Learning: This approach recognizes the value of both academic and applied learning, ensuring that students in the alternative pathway are not disadvantaged in their ability to transition between pathways or pursue further studies if they choose to do so.

Addressing Challenges and Misconceptions

To ensure the effectiveness and long-term success of the dual-pathway model, the following considerations will be addressed:

- Maintaining High Standards: The alternative pathway is designed to provide a high-quality education that maintains academic rigor while emphasizing practical applications.

- Professional Development for Teachers: Teachers will receive training to effectively integrate applied learning strategies and industry-relevant content.

- Enhancing Industry Partnerships: Collaboration with businesses and technical institutions will help align curriculum content with workforce demands.

- Promoting Equal Recognition: Efforts will be made to shift perceptions and highlight success stories from both pathways, ensuring that vocational education is viewed as a valuable and respected option.

- Flexibility and Mobility: Students will have opportunities to transition between pathways based on their evolving interests and aspirations.

The dual pathway approach in the revised national secondary curriculum will ensure that all students receive an education that is meaningful, empowering, and aligned with Tonga's social and economic needs. The mainstream pathway will prepare students for university and professional careers, while

the alternative pathway will provide hands-on, industry-relevant learning experiences. By recognizing the equal value of both academic and applied education, this curriculum will cultivate a more diverse, skilled, and adaptable workforce for the future.

Structure of Learning Areas and Subjects

The core and option subjects of this dual pathway curriculum are organised into nine broad Learning Areas as follows:

1. Tongan
2. Languages
3. Mathematics
4. Sciences
5. Humanities and Social Science
6. Arts
7. Health and Physical Education
8. Technologies
9. Functional Work Studies

Each Learning Area contains subjects that are complementary to each other (Table 4). For example, the Sciences Learning Area contains all the subjects related to science in both the mainstream and alternative pathway; namely, Science, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Agriculture and Climate Change and Sustainability. Organising subjects into broad learning areas serves several purposes:

- Ensures a broad and balanced education that includes academic, technical, vocational, and cultural knowledge.
- Provides a coherent structure that facilitates smooth progression from junior secondary (Forms 3-5) to senior secondary (Forms 6-7).
- Facilitates a systematic approach to developing appropriate Key Learning Outcomes (KLOs) in complementary subjects within the Learning Areas.
- Supports the development of key competencies and cross-cutting themes, such as critical thinking, communication, cultural identity, and sustainable development in related subjects.
- Prepares students for higher education, vocational training, and employment opportunities in Tonga, regionally and further afield.

Characteristics of the Learning Areas

A brief description of the focus and purpose of each Learning Area and the subjects within them is presented below.

Table 4: Description of Learning Areas

Learning Area	Subjects	Focus and purpose	Purpose (Key outcomes)
1. Tongan	Tongan Language, Tongan Society and Culture,	Strengthening students' linguistic and cultural identity by developing proficiency in Tongan language, literature, cultural knowledge, traditions,	Students demonstrate proficiency in Tongan language and ability to apply cultural knowledge in communication and social interactions.

		values, customs, history, and civic education.	
2. Languages	English language, Functional English, Chinese, French, Japanese	The study of additional languages, emphasising literacy, communication and intercultural competence.	Students demonstrate multilingual competence through communicating effectively in selected languages and engaging in diverse linguistic and cultural contexts.
3. Mathematics	Mathematics, Functional Mathematics, Mathematics with Calculus, Mathematics with Statistics	Mastery of essential mathematical concepts and skills, algebraic reasoning, geometric understanding, statistical literacy, and ability to apply them in real-life situations.	Students apply mathematical reasoning and problem-solving skills in academic, personal, professional, and everyday contexts.
4. Science	Science, Functional Science, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Agriculture, Climate change and sustainable development	Scientific inquiry, experimentation, and understanding of natural and environmental science and sustainability issues relevant to Tonga.	Students apply scientific knowledge and critical thinking to investigate and analyse real-world issues and propose solutions based upon scientific evidence.
5. Humanities and Social Science	Geography, History, Development Studies, Social Science, Accounting Economics, Bible Studies	Exploration of history, geography society culture, religion, governance and development issues	Students present knowledge of historical and social concepts and analyse their relevance to contemporary issues locally, regionally and globally.
6. Arts	Music, Visual Arts	Engagement in artistic expression through music and visual arts emphasizing creative expression, artistic techniques, cultural storytelling, and appreciation of aesthetic values.	Students create and interpret artistic works, applying technical skills and cultural understanding.
7. Health and Physical Education	Physical Education, Health and Well-being (Supplementary subject)	Physical fitness, health awareness, personal well-being, nutrition, mental and sexual health, social responsibility and sportsmanship.	Students adopt healthy lifestyles, participate in physical activities and sports, make informed decisions about personal well-being.
8. Technology	Computing and ICT, Design and technology	Digital literacy, ICT applications, design and technological innovation	Students use digital tools, technologies and 21st-century

		including in traditional arts and crafts;	skills to solve problems, innovate and communicate effectively.
9. Functional Work Studies	Tourism and Hospitality, Certificate of Technical and Vocational Skills (CITVS accredited by Manukau Institute of Technology, New Zealand), The Tonga Institute of Science and Technology (TIST) of TNU Franchising Programme (TFP)	Practical, hands-on skills in trade and industry fields with an emphasis on employability skills, entrepreneurship, and work readiness.	Students are prepared for meaningful employment, entrepreneurship, or further specialized training in vocational careers with industry-relevant competencies that meet workforce demands.

Learning Pathways

The national Curriculum Framework provides a Mainstream pathway and an Alternative pathway. These structured learning pathways are designed to accommodate diverse student needs, aspirations, and future career opportunities. Both pathways ensure that students acquire a strong foundational education while allowing for progressive specialization as they advance through secondary and senior secondary education.

The duality of the learning pathway system is observed beginning from Form 4. At Form 3, all students are to enrol in the same core subjects and select from the same optional subjects where the foundational skills and knowledge are built on from Form 2 and consolidated by providing a broad overview of learning. After Form 3, the student can then choose the Mainstream or Alternative Pathway.

Structure of the Learning Pathways

1. Mainstream Learning Pathway – Focused on academic progression leading to tertiary education or specialized careers.
2. Alternative Pathway– Designed for students pursuing technical, vocational, or industry-aligned certifications.

Each pathway includes core, optional, and supplementary subjects:

- Core subjects are mandatory for all students and provide essential knowledge and skills.
- Optional subjects allow students to explore interests and specialize in specific fields.
- Supplementary subjects (e.g., Health and Well-being) support holistic development and are incorporated across both pathways.

Mainstream Learning Pathway, Learning Areas and Subjects

The Mainstream Learning Pathway is structured to guide students through progressive levels of learning, beginning with a broad foundational education in Form 4 and moving towards greater specialisation at higher levels. Each grade level requires students to take a combination of core, optional and supplementary subjects, ensuring both a balanced curriculum and opportunities for individualised learning (Table 5).

At Form 3-4, students must take five core subjects, three optional subjects and one supplementary subject. As they progress to Form 5, the number of optional subject decreases to two, maintaining the focus on core disciplines. In Form 6, students begin to specialise, selecting only two core subjects but increasing their optional subjects to three. Finally, at Form 7, students study just one core subject, English, while selecting four optional subjects to align with their academic and career aspirations.

Table 5: Overview of subjects to be selected in the Mainstream Learning Pathway

Form	Level	No of subjects to be selected
Form 3-4	Lower secondary	5 core, 1 supplementary 3 options
Form 5	Upper Secondary	5 core, 1 supplementary 2 options
Form 6	Senior Secondary	2 core, 1 supplementary 3 options
Form 7	Senior Secondary	1 core, 1 supplementary 4 options

Table 6 below shows how the core subjects and option subjects are organised in the nine Learning Areas across the class levels within the Mainstream Pathway.

Table 6: Structure and organisation of the Mainstream Learning Pathway

Core subjects		
Form	Level	Subjects
Form 3	Lower and Upper Secondary	1. Tongan Language 2. English Language 3. Mathematics 4. Science 5. Social Science (incl. TSC in comparison to selected others)
Form 4	Lower Secondary	1. English Language[1] 2. Tongan Language 3. Mathematics[1,2] 4. Science[1] 5. Social Science (incl. TSC in comparison to selected others)
Form 5	Lower and Upper Secondary	1. English Language[1] 2. Tongan Language 3. Mathematics[1,2] 4. Science[1] 5. Social Science (incl. TSC in comparison to selected others)
Form 6	Senior Secondary	1. EnglishLanguage[1] 2. Mathematics[1,2]
Form 7	Senior Secondary	1. English Language[1]
Supplementary subject		
Forms 3-7	Lower to Senior Secondary	1. Health and Well-being

Option subjects				
Learning Area	Form 3	Form 4-5	Form 6	Form 7
Tongan			• Tongan Language • Tongan Society and Culture	• Tongan Language • Tongan Society and Culture
Languages	• Chinese, • French, • Japanese	• Chinese, • French, • Japanese	• Chinese, • French, • Japanese	• Chinese, • French, • Japanese
Mathematics				• Mathematics with calculus, • Mathematics with statistics
Sciences	• Agriculture	• Agriculture	• Agriculture, • Biology, • Chemistry • Physics • Climate Education	• Agriculture, • Biology, • Chemistry • Physics • Climate Education
Humanities and social science	• Geography, • History, • Accounting, • Economics	• Geography, • History, • Accounting, • Economics • Bible Studies	• Geography, • History, • Development Studies, • Accounting, • Economics • Bible Studies, • Tourism and Hospitality	• Geography, • History, • Development Studies, • Accounting, • Economics, • Bible Studies, • Tourism and Hospitality
Arts	• Music, • Visual Arts	• Music, • Visual Arts	• Music, • Visual Arts	• Music, • Visual Arts
Health and physical education	• Physical Education	• Physical Education	• Physical Education	• Physical Education
Technologies	• Computing and ICT, • Design and Technology	• Computing and ICT[1], • Design and Technology	• Computing and ICT[1], • Design and Technology	• Computing and ICT[1], • Design and Technology

Supplementary subject

Throughout all levels, Health and Well-being is included as a supplementary subject to support students' holistic development. Health and Well-being will include **Mind Education** – a holistic approach that focuses on deep thinking, meaningful exchanges and strengthening the Christian faith which then empowers and shift the mind-set to redefine a person's life and way of living to be successful and happier.

Health and Well-being (1–2 lessons per week for all levels)

Alternative Pathway, Learning Areas and Subjects

The Alternative Pathway is designed to equip students with practical skills and industry-relevant knowledge while maintaining a strong foundation in core subjects. Beginning with a broad education in Forms 4, the pathway progressively allows students to specialise in technical, vocational, and career-focused fields at higher levels (Table 7). Through a structured combination of core, optional

and supplementary subjects, students gain hands-on experience, workplace exposure, and entrepreneurial skills, ensuring they are well-prepared for employment, further training, or self-employment.

At Forms 4-5, students engage in five core subjects—Tongan Language, Functional English[2], Functional Mathematics[3], Functional Science[2], and Functional Computing & ICT[2]—ensuring they develop essential literacy, numeracy, scientific and digital skills. Students also choose up to three optional subjects from the Learning Areas such as Agriculture, Automotive Light Vehicle, Carpentry, Clothing and Textile and Commerce.

Beginning in Form 4, students have the opportunity to begin working towards industry-recognized certifications in fields that range from Agriculture to Fitting and machining, and Welding. In Form 6 and Form 7, the number of core subjects is reduced, allowing students to focus more on specialized subjects aligned with their career and employment interests. Thus, the Alternative Pathway provides a direct route from Form 4 to work related higher education programmes at technical institutes like TNU.

Table 7: Overview of subjects to be selected in the Alternative Pathway

Form	Level	No of subjects to be selected
Form 3	Lower Secondary	5 core, 1 supplementary 3 options
Form 4	Lower Secondary	5 core, 1 supplementary 3 options
Form 5	Upper secondary	5 core, 1 supplementary 2 options
Form 6	Technical	3 core, 1 supplementary 2 options
Form 7	Industry-ready	2 core, 1 supplementary 3 options

Table 8 below indicates how the core subjects and option subjects are organised in the nine Learning Areas across the class levels within the Alternative Pathway.

Table 8: Structure and organisation of the Alternative Pathway

Core subjects		
Form	Level	Subjects
Form 3	Lower Secondary	1. Tongan Language 2. English Language 3. Mathematics 4. Science 5. Social Science (incl. TSC in comparison to selected others)
Forms 4-5	Lower Secondary Upper Secondary	1. English Language[2], 2. Tongan Language 3. Mathematics[3] 4. Science[2] 5. Computing & ICT[2]
Form 6	Technical	1. EnglishLanguage[2] 2. Mathematics[3] 3. Computing & ICT[2]
Form 7	Industry-ready	1. English Language[2] 2. Mathematics[3]
Supplementary Subject		
Forms 3-7	Lower to Senior Secondary	Health and Well-being (incl. Career education @1 lesson, Mind Education, and Community Service@ once a term) and one cross curricular project towards end of year.

Optional Subjects				
Form 3	Form 4	Form 5	Form 6	Form 7
3 options from: • Accounting, • Economics, • Agriculture, • Chinese Language, • Computing and ICT • Design and Technology • French Language, • Geography, • History, • Japanese Language, • Music, • Physical Education, • Visual Arts ****The same in the Mainstream Pathway.**	**3 options from**: • Agriculture • Automotive Light Vehicle, • Beauty & Hairdressing, • Carpentry, • Clothing & Textile, • Commerce, • Electricity, • Fitting & machining, • Horticulture, • Hospitality, • Maritime, • Music, • Physical Education, • Plumbing, • Technical Drawing • Visual Arts, • Welding,	**2 options from**: • Agriculture • Automotive Light Vehicle, • Beauty & Hairdressing, • Carpentry, • Clothing & Textile, • Commerce, • Electricity, • Fitting & machining, • Horticulture, • Hospitality, • Maritime, • Music, • Physical Education, • Plumbing, • Technical Drawing • Visual Arts, • Welding	**2 options from**: • Agriculture • Automotive Light Vehicle, • Carpentry, • Commerce, • Cosmetology, • Electricity, • Fashion Design, • Fitting & machining, • Horticulture, • Hospitality, • Maritime, • Music, • Physical Education, • Plumbing, • Technical Drawing • Visual Arts, • Welding, • Automotive Light Vehicle, • Fitting & machining, • - Welding	**3 options from**: • Agriculture • Automotive Light Vehicle, • Carpentry, • Commerce, • Cosmetology, • Electricity, • Fashion Design, • Fitting & machining, • Horticulture, • Hospitality, • Maritime, • Music, • Physical Education, • Plumbing, • Technical Drawing • Visual Arts, • Welding, • Automotive Light Vehicle, • Fitting & machining, • - Welding

Supplementary Subjects

Throughout all levels, Health and Well-being is included as a supplementary subject to support students' holistic development which includes **Mind Education**. Additionally, supplementary learning includes Health and Well-being, career education, community service, and workplace placements, ensuring that students receive holistic preparation for both employment and further studies.

- Health and Well-being (1–2 lessons per week for all levels) including Mind Education
- Community Service (once per term for Forms 3-5)
- Cross-Curricular Project (introduced at Form 6, required at Forms 6-7)
- Workplace Placement (introduced at Form 6, required at Forms 6-7)

By offering a diverse range of learning areas tailored to Tonga's unique context, needs and aspirations, the curriculum framework provides a roadmap that sets out alternative pathways to empower students to pursue their interests, talents, and ambitions, while equipping them with the competences needed to contribute positively to their personal and professional development as well as their communities and beyond.

Differentiation in the core subjects

To ensure that students in both the Mainstream and Alternative Pathways receive subject content relevant to their academic strengths, interests, and future aspirations, the core subjects of English, Mathematics, and Science in Forms 5 and 6 are differentiated in the two pathways. This approach provides students with focused learning experiences while maintaining the integrity of essential subject knowledge and skills.

Differentiation for English

English is a core subject for all students, but its content and emphasis are tailored to the distinct needs of students in the two pathways:

1. Mainstream English[1]: This course is designed for students following an academic or university-bound pathway. English Language subject in this pathway focuses on advanced reading, writing, and analytical skills. It includes literature studies, critical analysis, research writing, and structured argumentation. The curriculum ensures that students develop proficiency in formal academic writing and comprehension, preparing them for higher education and professional careers.

   This core subject equips students with the required language skills for university-level studies in areas like the humanities, law, journalism, education, and social sciences, as well as careers that require strong analytical and communication abilities.

2. Functional English[2]: This course is tailored for students pursuing technical, vocational, or employment-oriented subjects in the Alternative (TVET) Pathway. The course emphasizes practical oral communication and presentation skills, workplace writing, business English, report writing, and comprehension of industry-related texts. The aim is to ensure students can use English effectively in real-world, professional, technical, vocational workplace settings.

   This core subject equips students with the functional language skills required for careers in technical trades, hospitality, tourism, healthcare, and other vocational fields, ensuring they can communicate effectively in professional settings.

Both pathways maintain a strong focus on literacy, communication, and critical thinking, ensuring that all students develop essential English language competences, regardless of their career or academic direction. The differentiation helps make English more relevant and engaging for all students.

Differentiation for Mathematics

Mathematics is a compulsory core subject, differentiated into three tracks. Students must select one of the following tracks at Forms 4-6 based on their academic needs and career goals:

1. Mainstream Mathematics[16]: This track is designed for students preparing for future science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM)-oriented studies. It serves as a foundation for advanced mathematical concepts, particularly calculus, which is introduced in Form 7. It

[6] The terms "Mainstream" and "Functional" are intentionally used to avoid stigmatization, ensuring that students are not perceived as having weaker or stronger mathematical abilities but are instead selecting the pathway most relevant to their future goals.

equips students with the analytical and problem-solving skills needed for pure sciences, engineering, and technology-related careers.

This track provides the necessary foundation for students interested in engineering, medicine, computer science, physical sciences, and technology-related careers.

2. Mainstream Mathematics[2]: This track is designed for students pursuing studies in humanities, arts, languages and social sciences. It emphasizes numeracy skills relevant to these fields, such as statistical analysis, data interpretation, and logical reasoning. It aligns with Mathematics with Statistics in Form 7, providing foundational skills necessary for research, policy analysis and decision-making in non-STEM careers. This track is ideal for students who wish to pursue careers in education, social sciences, business, media, and public administration.

3. Functional Mathematics[3]: This track is designed for students who are following the Alternative (TVET) pathway focussing on practical numeracy skills, financial literacy, measurement, and data interpretation relevant to real-world applications. Emphasis is placed on problem-solving in workplace contexts, including accounting, budgeting, trades-based calculations, statistical analysis for business, and understanding technical diagrams. The goal is to equip students with the functional mathematical skills necessary for their chosen careers and everyday life.

Differentiation for Science

Science is a compulsory core subject from Form 4 to Form 5 and builds upon Science studies up to Form 3. A student must select one of these two tracks:

1. Mainstream Science[1]: It consolidates and builds on essential science knowledge, laboratory skills, attitudes and values across the four main strands of Science progressed through from class 1 to Form 3 – The Living World, Physical and Material Worlds, and Planet Earth and Beyond – providing a broad overview for students beginning their high school science journey. It emphasizes hands-on activities, incorporating experiments, projects and laboratory work to make the concepts engaging and practical, equipping students with the necessary background to choose one of the tracks offered in Forms 6-7 for more specialized science courses.

2. Functional Science[2]: This track is developed for students studying the Alternative (TVET) Pathway. It is designed to provide opportunities for students to learn and apply key scientific principles to practical and workplace settings and covers essential concepts in applied physics, chemistry, and biology, with a focus on technology, health sciences, environmental sustainability, and industry-specific applications. Students engage in firsthand learning experiences, such as laboratory investigations, field studies, and problem-solving tasks, to develop scientific literacy and critical thinking for their careers.

Differentiation for Computing and ICT

There are two tracks offered in Computing and ICT:

1. The Mainstream Computing and ICT[1]: This is a course that is offered as an optional subject in Forms 4 to 7. It will involve an upgrade of the current Computing and ICT curriculum offered in the mainstream programs to ensure coherence with current applications and address technological issues that threatens global and local peace and stability. Personal and public

impacts of social media is continued to be addressed in ways to minimise negative influences in the society.

2. The Functional Computing and ICT[2]: This track is offered as a core subject for students taking the Alternative Pathway from Forms 4-6. It is a modified Computing and ICT course that promotes computer literacy with basic skills in hardware, software, and basic programming and prepare students for employment or further studies in relevant fields. The transferrable skills in this course will include amongst others, students' collaboration, teamwork, creative thinking, and problem solving using technology, application and communication.

Differentiation for Mainstream Social Science, Geography and History

There are three tracks that need clarification – Social Science as core subject for Mainstream Forms 3 to 5, Geography and History.

1. Mainstream Social Science: It is a core subject for the Mainstream Pathway for Forms 3-5 and it is expected to involve studying the history, geography, culture and traditions of Tonga and compare with other selected countries in the region and elsewhere – not covered in the mainstream History and Geography subject contents. Thereby, reducing redundancies and overlaps. The combination in Social Science will widen and enrich the context of student learning, linking the Tongan cultures to others and better prepare students not only as local but also global citizens. The key focus will be on the Tongan history, geography, cultures and traditions in our society with some side studies to compare. The side studies are not to negatively influence our Tongan culture and traditions but to increase appreciation of the Tongan identities and ways of living.

2. Mainstream History: This track will focus on specific local, regional and international historical events that build towards greater understanding of the present. The revised curriculum will maintain extension from the studies of local historical figures and their impacts and progress towards international figures and events in history. However, closer working relations between the writers of the Mainstream History track and the Mainstream Social Science will be required as to clearly define the limitations across subjects, and to grossly reduce any overlaps. The spheres to be studied in Mainstream Social Science is vast and the local history of one unique local leader studied in Mainstream History should be complementary to that in Mainstream Social Science.

3. Mainstream Geography: This track will be an update of the existing curriculum and will avoid overlaps with Social Science through close working collaboration of curriculum writers. The Mainstream Geography will involve detailed studies of the local topography that may be included briefly in the Social Science. Mainstream Geography will include other geographical concepts and skills as well as recent developments and potential aspects in the field to better prepare our young generation as future local and global citizens.

Differentiation for Mainstream Tongan Society and Culture and Tongan Language in Forms 6-7

There are differences in the two tracks that need to be clarified to ensure there is no overlap:

1. The Mainstream Tongan Society and Culture in Forms 6 and 7: It will be entirely on the Tongan cultures and traditions and built upon the Mainstream Social Science track in Forms 3-5. It will teach the Tongan proverbs, language and culture not covered in the Tongan Language

track from Forms 3-5. A distinct clarification will be made by the developers of the Tongan Language and the Tongan Society and Culture. The Tongan Society and Culture will prepare students to actively contribute and participate in communal traditional Tongan life such as in presenting 'ngaue', celebrating successes, funerals, relating to and working closely with others. There are many cultural and traditional skills that are not dealt with in the Tongan Language that will be propagated and maintained through the Tongan Society and Culture. The Tongan Society and Culture subject will encourage proper structuring and expressing of ideas as in the Tongan Language.

2. The Mainstream Tongan Language in Forms 3-7 will be using some proverbs and some Tongan cultural events but will focus on the language skills on a wider range of topics. Most of the proverbs and cultural aspects not covered in the Tongan Language course must be addressed in the Tongan Society and Culture to maintain the Tongan traditions and cultures and the identity of a Tongan. The student will learn in the Tongan Language subject, the skills to communicate ideas effectively on a wide range of issues including climate change, natural disasters, crypto finance, deep sea mining, etcetera that involves technical terms that are foreign to the Tongan Language. It will be very important to minimise a lot of direct Tonganisation of foreign words in order to maintain the integrity and flexibility of the Tongan language. However, there are times when direct Tonganisation of foreign terms are unforeseeable.

Progression and transition across the pathways

A key principle underpinning the dual pathway approach is that students should have the flexibility to take subjects from both pathways and to transition between them at key points in their educational journey. This ensures that students can pursue diverse learning opportunities while maintaining academic continuity and career readiness. A range of strategies can be adopted by schools to support progression within and transition between the pathways, as follows:

1. Flexibility in Subject Selection and Recognition

   Students in the Mainstream Pathway will primarily take core academic subjects aligned with the Tonga National Secondary Qualification (TNSQ) but may also choose elective subjects from the Alternative Pathway in Form 3 to Form 5. Similarly, students in the Alternative Pathway will focus on applied core subjects but may opt to take selected mainstream subjects to broaden their academic foundation.

   To ensure a seamless transition, credits earned in one pathway should be recognized if a student moves to the other pathway. A **subject equivalency framework** needs to be developed to clarify how subjects align and contribute toward qualifications.

   However, it should be noted that students in Form 5 to Form 7 pursuing the Mainstream Pathway cannot simultaneously enrol in the CITVS courses or Tonga Franchising Programme TVET courses offered by the School of Science and Technology at Tonga National University and earn TVET qualifications, while they are completing the Tonga National Secondary Qualification (TNSQ). Alternative options, such as short-course certifications or extracurricular technical training, may be considered to allow students to gain practical skills alongside their academic studies.

2. Structured Transition Points

Students who are capable and interested may transition between the two pathways at designated points to maintain academic coherence. The recommended transition points are:

- End of Form 4. This provides maximum flexibility and allows students to adjust their learning pathway before senior secondary school.
- End of Form 5 or 6. This also allow students to shift the focus of their studies based on their academic performance, evolving interests and career aspirations.
- Mid-year transitions are **not** encouraged and should only be considered in exceptional circumstances and provided students are able to meet specific academic and course completion requirements.

3. Bridging Courses and Support Programs

   Students transitioning between pathways may require additional support to bridge learning gaps. Therefore, schools are encouraged to offer structured bridging programs, tailored to the student's new pathway:

   - For students moving to the Mainstream Pathway: Targeted courses in Mathematics, Science, and English will help students meet academic expectations.
   - For students moving to the Alternative Pathway: Industry-specific training and technical skills development will facilitate a smoother transition.
   - Delivery modes: Schools should determine whether bridging courses are conducted through after-school programs, holiday workshops, or online learning modules to ensure accessibility.

4. Career Guidance and Counselling

   To support informed decision-making, career guidance is integrated into the curriculum through supplementary courses. Schools should provide students and parents comprehensive counselling on:

   - The implications of switching pathways, including qualification outcomes and career prospects.
   - How their subject choices align with long-term goals.
   - Available support mechanisms to assist with transition.

5. Monitoring and Evaluation of Transitions

   To ensure effective transitions and continuous improvement, schools should implement a monitoring and evaluation system that:

   - Tracks and records student movement between pathways.
   - Identifies common challenges faced by transitioning students.
   - Collects feedback from students, teachers, and employers to improve support mechanisms.
   - Engages partners and industry stakeholders to assess whether students in the Alternative Pathway are acquiring relevant workplace skills.

By implementing these guidelines, students will have greater opportunities to make informed choices about their education while ensuring that transitions between pathways are smooth, structured, and aligned with their future aspirations.

Section 10: Cross-cutting themes

The revised curriculum contains eight cross-cutting themes that are integrated and provide key areas of emphasis in teaching and learning across all subjects of the curriculum. The eight cross-cutting themes are:

The revised curriculum integrates eight cross-cutting themes that underpin teaching and learning across all subjects. These themes emphasize essential competencies that students need to develop in order to thrive in both local and global contexts. The eight cross-cutting themes are:

1. Developing 21st century skills
2. Climate change adaptation
3. Entrepreneurship
4. Using language across the curriculum (LAC)
5. Connecting learning to students' daily lives
6. Ensuring relevance to Tongan culture and values
7. Promoting gender sensitivity
8. Inclusive teaching and learning

These eight cross-cutting themes are infused within subjects of the curriculum to reinforce key learning outcomes and ensure students acquire relevant knowledge, understanding, skills and values applicable to real-world challenges.

Cross-cutting themes	Features
21st century skills	In response to the fast-paced changes taking place in the local and global environments in which we live, students need new competences to succeed in life, education, and work. The revised curriculum acknowledges that students need to develop 21st century skills that can be applied effectively in their life, further studies, and future careers. These skills include: In an increasingly complex and interconnected world, students need a broad set of skills to succeed in education, work, and life. The revised curriculum is designed to cultivate 21st-century competencies, including: • Collaboration and teamwork • Communication skills • Creativity • Critical thinking and problem solving • Global awareness • Information literacy • Innovation • Self-direction

- Social and emotional skills
- Digital literacy and technology skills

Opportunities to develop these competencies are embedded in Key Learning Outcomes (KLOs) and Key Learning Experiences (KLEs) relevant subjects.

Climate change adaptation

As a nation highly vulnerable to climate change, education must equip students with the knowledge and skills to understand and respond to environmental challenges. The revised curriculum integrates climate change education across relevant subjects, fostering:

- Awareness of local, regional, and global climate change impacts
- Understanding of adaptation and mitigation strategies
- Skills to reduce vulnerability and enhance resilience and sustainability

Students will engage with climate-related topics through interdisciplinary learning, inquiry-based projects, and real-world applications.

Entrepreneurship

To prepare students for future careers and economic participation, the curriculum emphasizes entrepreneurship and business skills. Key Learning Experiences focus on:

- Developing an entrepreneurial mindset
- Financial literacy
- Enterprise skills (problem-solving, leadership, networking, resilience)
- Digital literacy and innovation

Students will engage in project-based and experiential learning, including interdisciplinary projects, workplace experiences, and internships, to strengthen their readiness for employment and self-employment opportunities after they leave school.

Language across the curriculum

Language is central to learning in all subjects. The curriculum adopts a Language Across the Curriculum (LAC) approach to support students in mastering subject-specific language, including:

- Disciplinary vocabulary and key terms
- Subject-specific text structures and genres
- Reading comprehension strategies for different subjects

Explicit integration of language development within all subjects will enhance students' ability to engage with increasingly complex academic content as they progress through the curriculum.

Connecting learning to students' daily life

Teachers across the globe complain that they cannot motivate their students. One of the reasons for this is that students often struggle to see the relevance of what they are learning in the classroom to the daily realities and experiences

of their lives. The revised curriculum places a strong emphasis on developing students' understanding of the world around them by connecting students' everyday life experiences to the underlying subject specific principles and concepts upon which they are based. For example, Science is a subject that is particularly relevant to so many aspects of daily life. Science is involved in cooking, eating, breathing, sleeping, etc. The clothing we wear, the soap and shampoo we use, everything we use; from clothing, soap and shampoo to refrigerators and air conditioners is the result of advancement of science. The revised subject syllabuses include engaging Key Learning Experiences that provide opportunities and support for students to make the connections between the principles, concepts, and practices they learn in the classroom and their application in real life situations. This will deepen, extend, and strengthen their competences.

One of the key challenges in education is ensuring students find learning relevant and engaging. The revised curriculum emphasises connecting learning to real-world application by:

- Relating subject content to students' everyday experiences
- Encouraging inquiry and problem-solving in familiar contexts
- Providing Key Learning Experiences (KLEs) that link theoretical knowledge to practical applications

For example, Science lessons incorporate everyday phenomena such as cooking, weather patterns, and local environmental issues to make learning meaningful. This approach will deepen, extend, and strengthen their competences.

Relevance to Tongan culture and values

Tongan values and culture play a central role in the previous curriculum framework (2008-2012). Their significance is highlighted in the guiding principles of the curriculum. This is continued in the revised curriculum and students are provided with opportunities to engage with and learn about Tongan culture and values across the curriculum. For example, in in Science there are opportunities for students to learn about the scientific concepts that underpin traditional Tongan cultural practices such as how to relate phases of the moon to tides and their implications for agriculture and fishing.

Building on the previous curriculum framework (2008-2012), the revised curriculum continues to uphold Tongan cultural heritage and values, ensuring that learning is culturally relevant and rooted in students' identities; for example, by

- Exploring the scientific principles behind traditional Tongan practices (e.g., lunar cycles and fishing)
- Embedding cultural values such as respect, reciprocity, and communal responsibility within learning experiences
- Ensuring that the curriculum reflects and celebrates Tongan history, language, and customs

Promoting gender sensitivity	A gender sensitivity approach is adopted within the curriculum and a gender responsive approach to teaching is advocated. The curriculum is designed to foster gender equity and inclusivity in learning by: • Ensuring that all students have equitable access to learning opportunities • Avoiding gender stereotypes in educational materials and activities • Promoting gender-sensitive teaching practices through teacher professional development A gender-responsive approach ensures that the curriculum aligns with recognised good practice and local cultural values.
Inclusive mindsets and practices	The revised curriculum fosters inclusive mindsets and practices, encouraging students to respect diversity, embrace different perspectives, and contribute to equitable learning environments. Students develop empathy, fairness, teamwork and respect for all individuals, while challenging biases and stereotypes. Through Key Learning Experiences, they engage in activities that promote active listening, collaboration, and a sense of responsibility for inclusion in school and society.

The eight cross-cutting themes in the revised curriculum equip students with essential competencies for success in education, work, and life. By integrating these themes across subjects, the curriculum ensures that learning is relevant, inclusive, and aligned with both local cultural values and global challenges. Through carefully designed Key Learning Experiences, students develop the skills, knowledge, and mindsets needed to navigate an increasingly complex and interconnected world.

Section 11: Approaches to learning and teaching

As this curriculum is built around competency-based learning outcomes, specific approaches to learning and teaching are necessary. The key approaches emphasised in this revised curriculum are a learner- centred approach; the application of pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) to inform planning, teaching and assessing, and the provision of rich multi-stage Key Learning Experiences (KLEs).

Learner-centred approach

A competency-based learning outcomes curriculum focuses upon the learner, the competences they need to develop and the learning outcomes to be achieved. The revised curriculum therefore places a strong emphasis on adopting a learner-centred approach that is appropriate for the Tongan context. Such an approach acknowledges that all students have their own abilities, interests and learning needs, and that the teacher's role is to facilitate students' learning as individuals.

A learner-centred approach, as applied in this curriculum, has specific characteristics that shape the teacher's role in planning, teaching, and assessment (Box 5). Teachers are expected to plan lessons that engage students actively, address their individual learning needs, and create opportunities for meaningful collaboration and application of knowledge.

Box 5: Characteristics of a learner-centred approach

The teacher:

1. Focuses on students' learning outcomes in planning, teaching and assessment.
2. Views students as individual learners, plans and teaches accordingly.
3. Applies Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) to make effective choices to plan and facilitate learning (see below).
4. Recognises and addresses students' misconceptions in planning and teaching.
5. Integrates formative assessment into the learning and teaching process.
6. Links learning and teaching activities to students' daily lives and interests
7. Provides opportunities for interaction and collaboration among students.
8. Emphasizes active participation and engagement by the learners.
9. Uses learning resources flexibly and creatively to engage students in learning.
10. Provides opportunities for students to apply what they learn in new contexts.

The revised curriculum also emphasizes the importance of teachers developing their own competencies to effectively implement these learner-centred strategies in their planning, teaching and assessment.

Pedagogical content knowledge (PCK)

Effective teaching of any subject requires the integration of several distinct types of knowledge. Teachers need a strong foundation in content knowledge (CK) for their subject, alongside general pedagogical knowledge (GPK) that includes strategies such as classroom management, group work facilitation, questioning techniques, and assessment practices.

In addition to CK and GPK, teachers also require Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK), which is the ability to teach subject-specific content in ways that support students to develop deep understanding. At the subject level, PCK involves the teacher developing the ability to utilise and apply the following four types of knowledge:

1. Knowledge of the subject curriculum in terms of its outcomes and content areas.
2. Knowledge of students' understanding of subject topics and typical misconceptions they may hold.
3. Knowledge of effective strategies for teaching topics of the subject and addressing students' misconceptions.
4. Knowledge of what needs to be assessed and methods of assessing learning in the subject, both formatively and summatively.

Developed over time through experience and reflection, PCK is crucial to fostering meaningful learning in all subject areas.

Key Learning Experiences

A significant innovation in the revised curriculum is the introduction of Key Learning Experiences (KLEs). These are structured, multi-stage, learner-centred activities designed to help students develop and apply competences while demonstrating their achievement of Key Learning Outcomes (KLOs) (Box 6). KLEs challenge students to think critically, collaborate with peers, and apply their learning in new and meaningful contexts.

New student textbooks and Teacher Guides will be developed to support the implementation of KLEs. The textbooks will include structured activities aligned with the revised curriculum, ensuring that students engage with learning in a progressive and scaffolded manner. The integration of KLEs into textbooks and guidance in the Teacher Guides will provide teachers with practical tools to facilitate competency-based learning while maintaining alignment with the curriculum's broader goals.

The revised secondary curriculum adopts a competency-based approach to learning and teaching, emphasizing three key elements: a learner-centred approach, the application of Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK), and the integration of Key Learning Experiences (KLEs). A learner-centred approach ensures that teaching is responsive to students' individual needs, interests, and abilities. PCK supports teachers in making informed instructional decisions that enhance student understanding and address misconceptions. KLEs provide structured, multi-stage activities that promote active engagement, critical thinking, and real-world application of knowledge. Together, these approaches create a dynamic and supportive learning environment that fosters deep learning and the development of essential competences for students.

Box 6: Features of Key Learning Experiences

Key Learning Experiences

1. Aligned to specific KLOs;
2. Explicit focus on the learner;
3. Multi-staged activities that offer opportunities for initial success and contain activities and exercises that build upon each other;
4. Challenge learners to think for themselves;
5. Offer different levels of challenge, e.g., by including extension activities;
6. Provide choice and allow for a variety of open-ended responses;
7. Develop 21st century skills in context;
8. Opportunities for learners to collaborate, discuss and pose their own questions;
9. Opportunities for learners to apply what they learn to new situations;
10. Connect learning to real life use;
11. Provide opportunities for classroom assessment.

Section 12: Resources to support learning and teaching

Successful implementation of the revised curriculum relies on three essential resources that will be made available to every school: Subject Syllabuses, Teacher Guides, and Student Books. These resources provide structured support for lesson planning, instruction, and assessment.

Subject syllabuses

The Subject Syllabuses serve as essential reference documents for teachers, offering a comprehensive overview of subject-specific teaching requirements for the two Learning Pathways and different class levels. Each syllabus is structured into four key sections:

1. Curriculum Context – Introduces the revised curriculum, explains the competency-based learning approach, and highlights cross-cutting themes.
2. Subject Overview – Describes the nature and significance of the subject, its aims and guiding principles, and key differences between the previous and revised curriculum.
3. Teaching and Learning Approaches – Outlines subject-specific teaching strategies, recommended resources, and effective instructional practices.
4. Assessment – Provides guidance on formative and summative assessment methods to evaluate student progress.

Each syllabus concludes with an overview of the subject's Strands, Sub-strands, Major Learning Outcomes (MLOs), Key Learning Outcomes (KLOs), and content specifications, ensuring constructive alignment among each component.

Teacher Guides

A Teacher Guide is provided for each subject at each class level, offering detailed practical guidance on lesson planning and teaching. Each Teacher Guide includes:

- A breakdown of Content Specifications for each sub-strand, including the MLOs, KLOs, and more detailed content for each content area or topic.
- Step-by-step instructional strategies for Key Learning Experiences (KLEs) and related activities found in the Student Books.
- Recommendations on when and how to conduct formative assessments to monitor student progress.

The Teacher Guides are designed to provide a continuous source of reference for teachers, supporting structured and effective approaches to plan and teach their lessons and assess students' performance and progress.

Student Books

Student Books are produced for each subject at each class level. The Student Books are organised into Strands and sub-strands and contain several Units of Work. Each Unit of Work is linked to at least one KLO and contains a range of activities. Key features include:

- Clear learning outcomes and success criteria for achieving each KLO.
- Engaging activities that activate prior knowledge, introduce new topics, and reinforce learning through practice exercises.
- Step-by-step Key Learning Experiences (KLEs) that highlight essential content, often referred to as 'Big Ideas' or 'Need to Know' concepts.
- Collaborative learning tasks with clear instructions to promote student engagement.
- Concise and accessible language, with key vocabulary highlighted to support comprehension.

Supplementary resources

Teachers are encouraged to seek out supplementary materials, including digital resources, to enrich learning beyond the Student Books. By integrating videos, interactive simulations, online articles, and other multimedia tools, they can extend and enhance lesson content, making it more engaging and accessible. Selecting additional resources allows teachers to better cater to students' diverse needs, interests, and abilities, providing extra support for those who need reinforcement and greater challenges for advanced learners. Thoughtful use of supplementary materials fosters a more dynamic and inclusive learning environment that promotes deeper understanding and student engagement.

Together, the Subject Syllabuses, Teacher Guides, and Student Books provide essential guidance on curriculum content, instructional strategies, and assessment practices. To maximize their impact, teachers should integrate them thoughtfully into lesson planning and delivery. Additionally, by incorporating supplementary resources, including digital tools, teachers can creatively tailor learning experiences to better meet students' diverse needs, ensuring deeper engagement and improved learning outcomes.

Section 13: Assessment

Assessment plays a fundamental role in supporting student learning and ensuring the quality of education. It provides critical information about what students know, understand, and can do in relation to the intended curriculum (Black & Wiliam, 1998). In a competency-based curriculum, assessment serves multiple purposes: it helps teachers monitor student progress, informs instructional decisions, provides feedback for improvement, and ensures alignment among intended learning outcomes learning activities and competences that are demonstrated through assessment (Heritage, 2010; Popham, 2008).

A key principle in a competency-based curriculum is the clear relationship between Key Learning Outcomes (KLOs), which define what students are expected to learn, and Achieved Learning Outcomes (ALOs), which reflect students' knowledge, skills, and competencies as demonstrated through assessment. Ensuring strong alignment between KLOS and ALOs strengthens the learning process and informs continuous curriculum improvement (Guskey, 2003).

Figure 5 illustrates this relationship as a continuous feedback loop, where assessment data not only measure achievement but also inform refinements in teaching and curriculum design. This approach emphasizes that assessment should support learning rather than merely serve as a measurement tool (Brookhart, 2013).

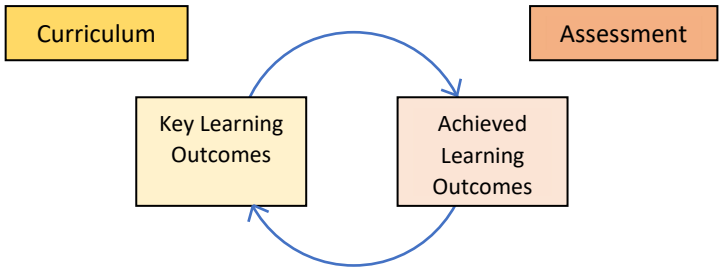

Figure 5: Learning outcomes and the connection between curriculum and assessment

Outcomes-based assessment

The purpose of outcomes-based assessment is to collect evidence about the extent to which students can demonstrate their competency development as a result of their curriculum learning. Assessment may be administered at different levels. This includes national assessments, such as the *Standardized Test of Achievement for Tonga* (STAT), high-stake examinations such as the *Secondary Entrance Examination* (SEE) at the end of Form 2, the Tonga Form Six Certificate (TFSC) and the Tonga National Form Seven Certificate (TNFSC). Outcomes-based assessment also includes ongoing classroom assessment.

Outcomes-based assessment is student-oriented, and the result is used to determine a student's achievement relative to a set of pre-determined standards (as described above), which are defined by the Key Learning Outcomes. It is also used to identify gaps in student learning. The revised curriculum is based upon four national competency standards (basic (L1), intermediate (L2), proficient (L3), advanced (L4), which are used to assess student performance from Year 1 to Year 13 in both national and classroom assessments.

Each KLO clearly states the competences (knowledge, understanding and skills) that students *are expected to know and be able to demonstrate at the completion of the lesson, unit, or program of study***.** When assessing student competency, the teacher needs to have a good understanding of the nature and scope of the KLO, the type of Key Learning Experiences (KLEs) that provide opportunities for students to develop or apply competency as well as the success criteria to be used for assessing student achievement of the KLO in the classroom.

Classroom assessment

Classroom assessment refers to the assessment carried out by teachers and students during daily activities in the classroom. It includes a range of possible ways of collecting written, oral, and other forms of evidence on the learning or achievement of the student. The main purpose of classroom assessment is to provide 'real time' information to support teaching and learning. In adopting classroom assessment, teachers use the result of the assessment for two main purposes, to improve student learning (formative) and to make judgments on the achievement of students (summative). The teacher can also use the results of classroom assessment, such as observations of students' learning or their response to questions to adjust their teaching during the lesson or to inform planning for future lessons. This type of assessment is NOT used for formal assessment purposes.

Formative Assessment

Formative Assessment, also commonly referred to as Assessment for Learning (AfL), refers to the

> "activities that are carried out by teachers, and by their students in assessing themselves, to provide information to be used as feedback to modify the teaching and learning activities in which they are engaged. Such assessment becomes formative when the evidence is actually used to adapt the teaching to meet the needs." (Black & Wiliam, 1998: 139-148).

What is important about formative assessment is not the design of the assessment activities, but rather the way the teacher uses the result of the assessment, to inform and modify teaching and learning throughout instruction. The effectiveness of formative assessment depends on the teacher's ability to provide quality and timely feedback that helps students know their performance, what they need to do to improve their learning, and allows the teacher to adjust their teaching accordingly. This helps the teacher to identify what the student has yet to achieve and enables them to focus their planning on closing the gap between the student's actual level of performance and the desired level of performance.

The emphasis on strengthening formative assessment practices is supported by the introduction of success criteria in Student Books. Success criteria are short statements written in a learner friendly way to outline what learners need to demonstrate or achieve in order to achieve specific KLOs. They provide specific, measurable benchmarks that are used to assess and gauge learners' ongoing progress towards mastery of desired competences.

Summative Assessment

Summative Assessment, commonly referred to as assessment of learning (AoL), refers to any assessment that the teacher administers at the end of a lesson, unit, term or year. It enables the teacher to measure a student's competence against standardized criteria and learning outcomes. Its primary purpose is to gauge students' mastery of the learning material or their ability to apply their learning at the end of a period of learning such as a unit of work. A common example of summative assessment is the teacher

designed test although there are other types of assessment methods available such as mid-term, end of term and end of year exams.

Because summative assessment happens after the instruction process, it has little diagnostic value and does not provide teachers with vital information they need to plan and develop targeted interventions in the same way that formative assessment can. Table 10 below provides an overview of the main characteristics of formative and summative assessment.

Table 9: Characteristics of formative and summative assessment

Characteristics	Formative Assessment *(Assessment for learning)*	Summative Assessment *(Assessment of Learning)*
Goal	– To improve student learning	– To prove student learning
Purpose	– Evaluate and improve student learning	– Evaluate and make judgments about student learning
Timing	– During the learning process	– After the learning process
Frequency	– Ongoing	– At certain points in time
Use of the evidence	– Monitor student learning – Provide ongoing feedback – Identify learning gaps	– Compare student performance – Award grades – Selection to a higher level
Nature of evaluation	– An ongoing process	– A product
Status of assessment	– Usually low-stake – Comprises both formal and informal techniques – Low status and less reliable	– Usually high-stake – Comprises formal testing – High status and reliable
Assessment method	– Use a range of both formal and informal assessment methods, e.g., observations, questioning, classroom activities, presentations, quizzes, tests, homework.	– Use only a limited number of assessment methods, e.g., End of Lesson/Topic/Term/Year Tests, examination papers.
Level of student engagement	– Actively engaged (self-assessment, peer-assessment, assessment as learning) – Use evidence from assessment to monitor own progress	– Not involved in design of assessment – No involvement in the use of evidence for monitoring

Assessing Learning Outcomes

Learning in the subject syllabuses is structured around a number of strands and sub-strands. There is a single overarching Major Learning Outcome (MLO) for each strand and several Key Learning Outcomes (KLOs) for each sub-strand. For each subject strand and sub-strand, a set of generic success criteria can be developed for each of the four competency standards. These criteria form a generic rubric that helps to guide both the teaching and assessment for each subject at each year level. Weighting (%) is allocated for each strand as well as each competency level.

The weighting reflects the importance of each strand in the subject as a whole. The weighting allocated to each strand is used to determine the time allocated to the teaching of the content associated with the strands. Similarly, the weighting allocated to each competency level also needs to be provided as this has considerable influence both on the development of summative examination

papers as well as the emphasis on teaching. Table 11 below indicates the sample weighting for mathematics at Form 3.

Table 10: Weighting of strands and sub-strands

Strand / Sub-strand	Weighting	Competency Level			
		Basic 30%	Intermediate 40%	Proficient 20%	Advanced 10%
Numbers	35%				
Algebra	25%				
Geometry	20%				
Statistics	20%				

In a competency-based curriculum, the primary goal is for learners to master specific competences in the subjects they have studied. Assessment provides the means and evidence to determine the extent to which learners have developed and are able to demonstrate the required competences. A comprehensive assessment system requires both formative and summative components. Ongoing formative assessment allows the teacher to provide real-time feedback that can be used to improve learning by adjusting their teaching on the spot to further support learners' understanding. Summative assessments on the other hand, provide an accountability mechanism for both learners and teachers. They can measure learners' competences against the National Assessment Standards. At the same time, they reflect the effectiveness of teaching methods and curriculum design, by providing feedback on the quality of instruction. They also communicate student achievement to various stakeholders, including students, parents, educators, and policymakers. The data arising from summative assessments can also inform educational policies, resource allocation, and ongoing adjustments and improvements to the curriculum. However, to maximize its impact, assessment must be implemented with flexibility, acknowledging that students progress at different rates.

Ongoing review of assessment practices, investment in teacher professional development, and a commitment to student-centered strategies will help sustain an assessment system that not only measures learning but actively enhances it. Through this structured, competency-based approach, Tonga can ensure that its students progress systematically towards higher levels of mastery, equipped with the knowledge and skills needed for their future success.

Section 14: Teacher preparation and professional development

A well-designed curriculum on its own does not guarantee successful implementation and improved student learning outcomes. Its success depends on the quality of teaching. Research consistently highlights the central role that teachers play in successful education reform:

> "Teachers are the single most important influence on student learning." (Marzano, 2003).
>
> "The quality of teaching is the most important determinant of student learning outcomes," (Hattie, 2009).
>
> "The broad consensus is that "teacher quality" is the single most important school variable influencing student achievement," (OECD, 2015).

Given the substantial revision of this curriculum, comprehensive, sustained and high-quality teacher professional development is essential. History shows that curriculum reforms often fail when teachers are not adequately prepared. Therefore, sufficient time and resources must be allocated to equip both teachers and school principals with the knowledge and skills needed for effective implementation.

In-Service Teacher Training

For experienced teachers, curriculum changes present both challenges and opportunities. Teachers must develop:

- A deep understanding of new competency levels and learning outcomes and their implications for teaching, learning, and assessment.
- Enhanced pedagogical content knowledge relevant to their subject and grade level.
- Familiarity with Key Learning Experiences (KLEs) and how to integrate them into daily instruction.
- The ability to use success criteria effectively to support formative assessment and instructional planning.

Without adequate support, the revised curriculum may unintentionally erode teacher confidence and lead to ineffective implementation. A one-off workshop is insufficient; research indicates that high-impact professional development requires 30–100 hours of training over 6–12 months (Yoon et al., 2007; Guskey & Yoon, 2009; Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). In-service Teacher Training needs to be:

- Sustained: Delivered in multiple sessions over time.
- Interactive: Engaging teachers in hands-on use of curriculum materials and collaborative lesson planning.
- Practice-based: Incorporating model lessons, peer observation, and structured reflection.

To ensure continued support, teachers should participate in:

- District-based training sessions at the end of each term, forming communities of practice where they are guided to reflect upon and share their experiences of implementing the curriculum with other teachers, identify successes and challenges, work together to find

solutions and engage in further collaborative planning (Burke, et al. 2020, Darling-Hammond, 2009, Popova et al. 2019, Vescio et al 2008).

- Create virtual professional networks e.g., Using WhatsApp or Facebook groups to facilitate ongoing collaboration and resource sharing.

Pre-Service Teacher Education

Newly trained teachers must enter the workforce with a solid grounding in the revised curriculum. This requires updates to initial teacher education programmes to ensure that student teachers:

- Develop a clear understanding of curriculum structure, including competency-based learning, KLOs, and KLEs.
- Strengthen their pedagogical content knowledge to align with curriculum expectations.
- Gain experience using key curriculum resources (framework, subject syllabuses, teacher guides, and student books).
- Understand the role of formative and summative assessment in supporting student progress.

The structure of the teaching practicum may also need revision, including updates to lesson planning and observation tools to reflect curriculum changes.

The Role of School Principals

School principals play a critical role in supporting teachers through curriculum implementation. To fulfil this role effectively, they need:

- A comprehensive understanding of the revised curriculum and its implications for teaching and assessment.
- Training on instructional leadership strategies to support and guide teachers.
- Opportunities to engage with other school leaders to discuss best practices and problem-solving strategies.

Principals should also facilitate school-based professional development, ensuring that teachers receive ongoing support beyond formal training sessions.

Effective curriculum implementation depends on well-prepared teachers and school leaders. A one-time workshop is insufficient; sustained, interactive, and practice-based professional development is essential to equip teachers with the knowledge, skills, and confidence needed to implement the revised curriculum successfully. Similarly, pre-service teacher education must be aligned with curriculum changes to ensure that new teachers enter the profession with a strong foundation. School principals, as instructional leaders, play a key role in supporting teachers and fostering a collaborative learning environment. A strategic and well-supported approach to teacher preparation and professional development will maximize the impact of the revised curriculum on student learning outcomes.

Section 15: Monitoring and evaluation

A systematic approach to monitoring and evaluation (M&E) is crucial for the successful implementation of a new curriculum. M&E should not be a one-off event but an ongoing process that provides continuous feedback to improve curriculum delivery and enhance student learning experiences. This section outlines the purpose, key components, and processes of M&E in the revised curriculum, highlighting its role in evidence-based decision-making and accountability.

Purpose and importance of monitoring and evaluation

M&E plays a vital role in ensuring that the revised curriculum is effectively implemented and provides full opportunities for students to achieve the intended learning outcomes. M&E allows curriculum developers and stakeholders to:

- Assess the effectiveness of curriculum implementation in real-time.
- Identify challenges and areas for improvement based on evidence.
- Ensure alignment with educational standards and stakeholder expectations.
- Support continuous professional development of teachers.
- Promote transparency and accountability in curriculum implementation.

Components of monitoring and evaluation

As the name indicates, monitoring and evaluation consists of two distinct but related phases.

Monitoring

Monitoring is an ongoing process that involves systematic tracking of curriculum implementation through:

- Follow-up support visits to schools – These visits provide on-site support, advice, and capacity development for teachers. They also help assess teachers' progress in implementing the curriculum and identify areas where additional training is needed.
- Classroom observations – Education officers and school leaders observe lessons to evaluate instructional practices and provide feedback.
- Teacher reflection and feedback – Teachers document their experiences, successes, and challenges, which inform further professional development.

Evaluation

Evaluation involves the systematic collection and analysis of data to assess curriculum effectiveness. Key elements include:

- Teacher and Student Feedback – Surveys, focus group discussions, and interviews are conducted to gather insights into teaching and learning experiences.
- Assessment Data Analysis – Student performance data is reviewed to determine whether learning outcomes are being achieved.

- Stakeholder Engagement – Policymakers, school leaders, and community representatives provide input on curriculum outcomes and future improvements.

Implementation of the monitoring and evaluation plan

A structured Monitoring and Evaluation Plan has been developed to guide implementation of the revised curriculum. This plan includes:

- Clear roles and responsibilities for teachers, education officers, and curriculum developers.
- Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to measure curriculum effectiveness.
- Timelines and Reporting Mechanisms to ensure timely review and action.
- Feedback Loops that ensure findings from evaluations inform curriculum improvements and teacher training programs.

A robust monitoring and evaluation system ensures that curriculum implementation is responsive, evidence-based, and continuously improving. By systematically collecting and analysing data, addressing challenges proactively, and ensuring strong feedback mechanisms, the M&E process contributes to better teaching and learning outcomes. To make M&E effective it is important to focus on enhancing data collection efficiency, increasing stakeholder involvement, and refining the use of evaluation findings for curriculum development.

Conclusion

This revised Curriculum Framework for Secondary and Senior Secondary Schools (Form 3-7) in Tonga represents a significant milestone in the development of an education system that is responsive to the needs of learners, communities, and the nation as a whole. Grounded in a clear vision, sound educational principles, and internationally recognized practices, this framework establishes the foundation for a coherent, inclusive, and future-oriented curriculum that promotes lifelong learning, equity, and excellence.

The framework serves as an overarching document that articulates the aims, principles and components of the revised curriculum. It is designed to align with the Curriculum Framework developed in 2023 for Primary School education in Tonga (Class 1-Form 2). Furthermore, it provides the basis for the design and development of more detailed curriculum materials including the subject syllabuses, assessment frameworks, teacher guides, student textbooks, and other support resources.

The curriculum framework is forward looking recognising the need for students in Tonga to develop the competences required to navigate local and global challenges, build resilience, and lead sustainable lives. While it builds upon the outcomes-based approach of the 2012 curriculum, it introduces a new dual pathway model and competency-based approach to defining intended learning outcomes and approaches to learning. These innovations provide students with greater opportunities to acquire essential competences necessary to thrive in an ever-evolving world.

The revised curriculum is designed in line with established curriculum development principles and benchmarked against internationally recognised practice. The revised curriculum is designed to offer a systematic, coherent, and streamlined approach that seamlessly integrates curriculum, student learning and assessment. If the appropriate levels of support and resources are provided by all stakeholders, this framework has the potential to successfully address the challenges encountered during implementation of the 2012 curriculum, enhance learning and teaching and ultimately improve student learning outcomes.

As the education sector moves forward with implementing this revised framework, it is imperative that all stakeholders work together to uphold its vision and objectives. Through a shared commitment to its principles, we can strengthen the quality and equity of the education system in Tonga, empowering all learners to reach their full potential, lead fulfilling lives and contribute positively to national development.

Glossary of Key Terms

Term	Explanation
21st Century Skills	A set of skills and competencies essential for success in today's rapidly changing world. These include critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, communication, digital literacy, problem-solving, and global awareness.
Assessment as Learning (AaL)	A formative assessment approach where students monitor, reflect on, and regulate their own learning. It emphasizes students' metacognitive skills—helping them to think about their thinking, set goals, and adjust their learning strategies to improve performance and take ownership of their learning.
Assessment for Learning (AfL)	A formative assessment process where teachers gather and use evidence of student learning to provide feedback and adjust classroom instruction. It supports learning by identifying needs and promoting progress during the learning process.
Assessment of Learning (AoL)	A summative assessment process that evaluates students' achievement at the end of a learning period, such as final exams or standardized tests.
Big Idea	A broad and fundamental concept that focuses on the most important concept or principle in a topic. Big Ideas help students establish foundational concepts.
Competency	The combination of knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes that students need to apply effectively in different contexts. Competency-based learning focuses on students' ability to demonstrate what they have learned.
Competency-Based Learning	An approach that focuses on students mastering specific skills and competences rather than just completing a set curriculum.
Constructive alignment	The process of ensuring consistency between learning outcomes, learning activities and assessments.
Cross-Curricular Learning	Teaching and learning that integrates knowledge, skills, and themes across multiple subjects to promote a holistic understanding.
Cross-cutting theme	An overarching theme that is integrated across multiple subjects and learning areas to address broad societal, environmental, or ethical issues, such as sustainability, gender equality, 21st century skills.
Curriculum Framework	A structured plan that outlines the vision, principles, learning areas, teaching strategies, and assessment methods guiding education at a national level.
Differentiation	A teaching approach that tailors instruction to meet diverse student needs, abilities and interests.
Formative Assessment	Ongoing assessment used by teachers to monitor student progress and inform instruction. It helps students improve during the learning process and is commonly referred to as *Assessment for Learning (AfL)*.

Inclusion	An educational approach that promotes diversity, equity, and removes barriers so that all students, regardless of background, ability, or disability, have equal access to meaningful learning opportunities.
Inquiry-Based Learning	A student-centered approach that encourages learners to ask questions, explore, and investigate topics to construct knowledge.
Intended Learning Outcome	A general term for the specific knowledge, skills, and attitudes students are expected to demonstrate after completing a course or learning activity.
Key Learning Experience (KLE)	A rich, often multistage task designed to help students develop essential skills, knowledge, and competences within a subject or across multiple disciplines
Key Learning Outcome (KLO)	The essential knowledge, understandings, and skills that students should acquire within a unit of work or lesson.
Language across the Curriculum (LAC)	An approach that emphasizes the role of language in learning across all subjects. It recognizes that language is not only a subject to be taught but also a tool for thinking, learning, and communication in every subject discipline.
Learning Area	A broad grouping of subjects that share related knowledge, skills, and concepts. For example, Sciences, Social Sciences, and Languages are Learning Areas that encompass multiple subjects within them. Learning Areas provide a structured approach to organising the curriculum.
Learning Pathway	A structured route through the curriculum that guides students toward specific learning and career goals. Tonga's secondary curriculum offers two pathways: an academic pathway focusing on general education and preparation for higher studies, and an alternative pathway emphasizing practical, vocational, and skills-based learning.
Learning progression	A sequenced development of knowledge, understanding and skills students are expected to learn within a subject. It shows how learning builds over time and supports curriculum design, teaching, and assessment.
Major Learning Outcome (MLO)	The broader, overarching learning goals that define what students should achieve at the completion of a major Strand within the Student Textbook.
Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK)	The specialised knowledge that teachers develop by combining subject matter knowledge (what to teach) with pedagogical knowledge (how to teach it effectively). PCK helps teachers adapt subject content for different learners, making complex concepts accessible and addressing misconceptions.
Pedagogy	The art and science of teaching. It refers to the methods, strategies, and approaches that teachers use to support and facilitate learning.
Student-Centred Learning	An instructional approach that places students at the centre of the learning process, emphasizing their active participation, engagement and choice.

Summative Assessment	An evaluation conducted at the end of a learning period to measure student achievement against predefined standards or outcomes.
Syllabus	A detailed document that outlines the content, learning outcomes, assessment criteria, and teaching strategies for a specific subject.

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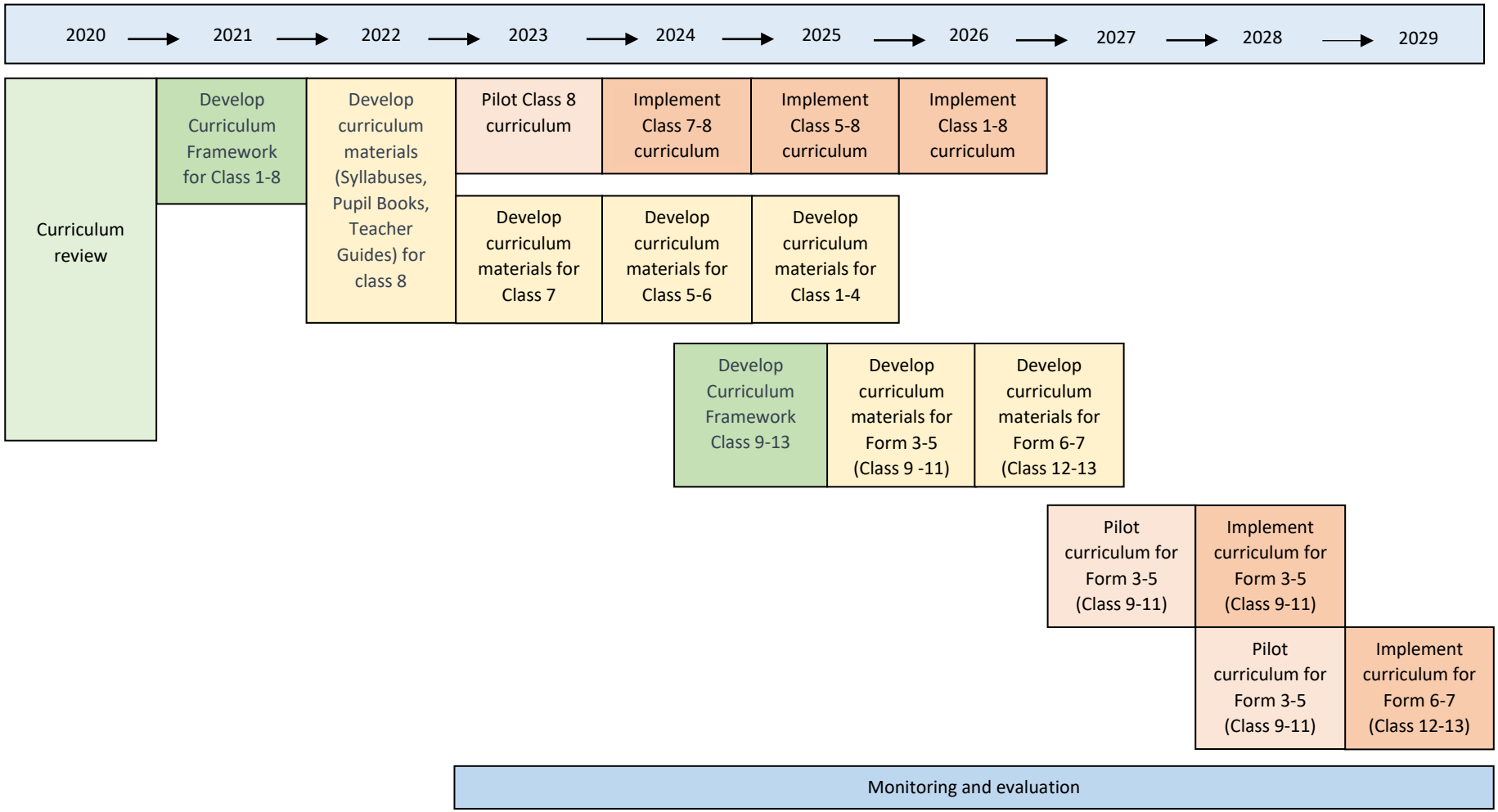
Annex I: Timeline of the curriculum renewal process



Annex II: Curriculum consultation process

Stakeholder consultation has been an important aspect of the process of developing the revised curriculum. Consultations included a comprehensive survey of teachers and focus group meetings with a wide group of stakeholder groups prior to development of the framework. Following completion of the initial draft of the curriculum framework, further consultations were held with key stakeholder groups.

Preliminary Analysis Phase

Prior to commencing design of the revised curriculum framework an initial survey of 150 government and non-government secondary school teachers from Tongapatu, was conducted in April 2024. The survey elicited teachers' opinions about the curriculum, its structure, subjects and when they should be introduced.

In addition, a range of stakeholder focus groups meetings were held to elicit views on key proposals for the reform of the secondary and senior school curriculum as follows:

Date	Stakeholder consultation
19 April 2024	Academic staff of the School of Education at Tonga National University (TNU)
19 April 2024	Representative group of head teachers and senior teachers in Nuku'alofa
19 April 2024	Group of Form 5 students in Nuku'alofa
22 April 2024	Representatives of the School of Education at the University of the South Pacific (USP)
23 April 2024	Separate meetings with staff of the Ministry of Fisheries, Ministry of Health and MEIDECC
24 April 2024	Representatives of Civil Society organisations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs)
26 April 2024	Senior Management Team of the Ministry of Education and Training (MET)
6 June 2024	Senior Management Team of the Ministry of Education and Training (MET)
August 2024	MET Management Retreat
January 2025	MET Management Retreat
February 2025	Meeting with Directors of the Education Systems
10 March 2025	MET Senior Management Meeting